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EPISCOPAL DIVINITY SCHOOL

Thesis/Project

A STUDY OF THE EFFECT OF ANTI-RACISM EDUCATION ON THE
ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS OF SUBURBAN CHRISTIANS

BY

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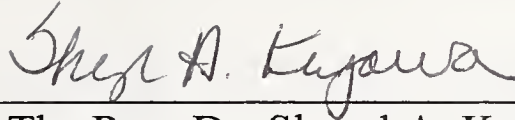
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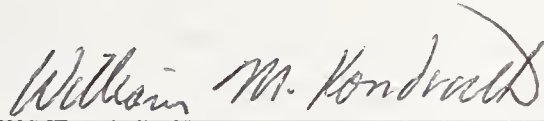
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Chapter One - Introduction

For the last twelve years I have served as a parish priest in three suburban congregations in the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts in Middlesex County. Membership in each of these congregations is predominantly white and the population of each of the three towns (Lexington, Burlington and Weston) is 94% white, but with an increasing number of African-American and foreign-born Asian families. But rarely has an Asian person or family visited the church. In each congregation I have observed black individuals and families, new to town, attending worship services for a few weeks. They were welcomed by parishioners in worship and at coffee time, received a “welcome” note card and parish mailings, but they did not respond to my offer to meet with them. They did not continue to attend. Where had they chosen to worship and why? Why are black people ‘in and out’ of white churches?

According to Abigail and Stephen Thernstrom, authors of America in Black and White: One Nation, Indivisible, the migration of African-Americans to the suburbs is greater now than the historic movement of blacks to the cities after World War II. From 1970-1990 when more than 6 million middle-income African-Americans moved to suburban areas.¹ Between 1980 and 1990 the black population outside Boston, but inside Route 128, rose 64% while the white population decreased by 9%.² In Middlesex County alone the Census reports a 25% increase of black citizens within the last ten years. (From 40,000 to 50,000) The present movement of middle-income African-Americans to the inner-suburbs began in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement: Affirmative Action, the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968, and improved suburban public school education which

now includes black history, and diversity appreciation, etc. Historically, “some scholars have noted a tendency of upwardly mobile African Americans to become members of white denominations like the Episcopal Church, partly out of the effort to confirm their new status.”³ Yet from 1983-1995 there has only been a slight increase in the membership of African Americans in the Episcopal Church in the diocese of Massachusetts.⁴ The increase in African-Americans attending Episcopal congregations in the suburbs in the diocese of Massachusetts does not seem to have increased by the same proportion as the movement of the black population or the increase in the population. Unfortunately, neither the Episcopal Church Foundation’s 1999 Zacchaeus report nor the U.S. Census gathered data on church membership by race in any residential area.

Similar to other mainline Protestant churches nationally, the Episcopal Church has reported a 36% decline in membership over the last 30 years (1967-97), according to the June 1999 Zacchaeus Report. This may be partly due to improvements in the method of reporting done by Episcopal clergy on the required annual parochial report. Yet there has been a 31% increase in attendance over the same period compared to the 25% increase in general population. Perhaps the increase in attendance reflects an increase in the number of people who are not counted as “members” of the Episcopal Church. In each congregation in which I have served only 60% of those who attend worship regularly were confirmed in the Episcopal Church. The Episcopal Church continues to welcome people from other denominations to participate in the life of the congregation. But we do not seem to have welcomed the increasing numbers of persons of color into suburban congregations.

The Episcopal Church prides itself on the greeting, “The Episcopal Church welcomes you”, which is printed on the street sign outside of most Episcopal churches. It has been my experience that congregations in the Episcopal Church make efforts to welcome *all* persons to worship and receive the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist. The Episcopal Church welcomes all people *when they come in the doors* of the church, but rarely do Episcopalians *invite* anyone to come to worship with them. The “welcome” includes an assumption that newcomers will assimilate to the traditions of the congregation and expectations of its existing parishioners (dress, behavior and forms of piety). “Jews (and Irish) have been able to overcome the barriers of ethnic differences because of their pigmentation... For blacks, the culture of difference is inextricably bound up with the culture of inferiority, and eminent exceptions among black folk only serve to prove the rule.”⁵ I heard a parishioner remark about a black newcomer, “And you know, he’s a lawyer!” There seems to be an expectation that non-white newcomers who attend a predominantly white church *cannot* fully assimilate. And why should they?

Hopefully, communities of faith change and grow by the incorporation of new members, because new members bring new ideas and gifts for ministry. Predominantly white suburban congregations will not grow in the full stature of Christ until they welcome people of every language, race and nation. Are predominantly white suburban congregations afraid of being transformed by the incorporation of people of color?

Thirty years ago Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “Eleven o’clock Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in America”. “The fact is that the mainstream Protestant churches, despite changes in their official policies, remain one of the strongest bastions of

racial separation and prejudice, to say nothing of class and sexual division.”⁶ What is it about a predominantly white suburban church that is unattractive or not welcoming to black Christians who have moved to the suburbs? Is racism their primary concern? Would an anti-racism education program make a difference in how persons of color are received and incorporated into the life of the congregation? Before I could answer those questions as a white person, I realized that I needed to explore what might be some of the spiritual needs of black middle-income Christians living in the suburbs. Where are black individuals and families who have moved to suburban areas going to church and why?

Recently I learned that many suburban black families are traveling a distance to worship in predominantly black congregations that are located in communities just outside of Boston, and that a predominantly black independent congregation had been established in the suburban city of Framingham. In order to learn more about this movement I met and interviewed the pastors of three predominantly black churches. 1) An Episcopal congregation in Cambridge, a city adjacent to Boston, to which many black parishioners travel from their homes in the suburban towns of Burlington and Billerica. 2) An American Baptist congregation in West Newton, a city adjacent to Boston, which also has many black parishioners “coming from within a 75-mile radius of the church”, including Weston. 3) An independent inter-denominational congregation located in a neighborhood in Framingham which has parishioners commuting for worship, fellowship and education from adjacent towns (Natick, Marlboro, Needham, Sudbury).

Since the 1900’s nearly every new development in black religion has been a corollary of the great migration of African Americans from the rural South to cities in the

South and North.⁷ From the days of emancipation until the 20th C. the black church has been the most important black institution after the family. “The black church has consistently been the chief agency of social control, giving Negroes their first opportunity for economic cooperation and a refuge in a hostile world.”⁸ What does the black suburban church offer? Has it changed with the migration of more black families to the suburbs and with increased mobility and better employment opportunities with higher income and higher education? It would seem that black Christians who live in the suburbs have four options in regard to Sunday worship and church membership:

- A. They can decide not to attend church at all. Like many middle class white families in which both husband and wife work, their lives have become increasingly secularized, and religion has become only one of many obligations and commitments which families must choose between. E.g. Many white suburban families choose their children’s Sunday morning soccer games over Sunday worship, and attendance at church is either inconsistent or nonexistent in their lives.
- B. In order for any couple or family to become more fully involved in their new residential community, they may choose to attend a local church in the suburban community in which they live, even though it may not be the same denomination as their personal religious history. This is a challenge to all “new” people entering a church, but it is more challenging to African-American, Asian, Hispanic or foreign-born people entering a predominantly white European-American congregation because they will be expected to assimilate to the predominant culture.

- C. They can choose to return, even travel a distance, to the church where they most recently belonged and worshipped. It is not unusual for all families who have recently moved to the suburbs from the city to return to their “home” church where their religious life has its roots. Black people who have moved to the suburbs from the city, or have moved to the suburbs from other parts of the country, may choose to travel a distance to worship in a predominantly black church.
- D. They can gather together with other black people in the suburbs and form a predominantly black church that may be more willing and able to meet a variety of spiritual needs, which a predominantly white suburban church cannot.

Having read about the historical development of black churches in America and interviewed these three clergy about their congregations, I propose that there are at least 9 reasons why the third and fourth options (worshipping in a predominantly black church) are more appealing than the first and second (not worshipping at all or worshipping in a predominantly white church). I acknowledge that I am a white middle income woman of English/Irish decent who has only rarely experienced oppression, prejudice or isolation in the American culture, but I offer my perspective from a genuine desire to live and worship in a diverse and inclusive community.

1. **Worship:** All three pastors told me that their worship services are more enthusiastic, spontaneous, demonstrative and less formally structured than predominantly white churches. Worshippers clap hands while they sing hymns, physically move to the rhythm of the music and verbally respond to message of the preacher and in prayers. Music includes gospels, spirituals, hymns and chants. The hymnals, prayers and

education all celebrate their African American heritage. Members come from many different Christian traditions, and worship in unity. According to one pastor, “The preaching and teaching are on the money, emphasizing the importance of black families staying together, worshipping together.” According to one church’s History, “The church became “a focal point of community worship, social and political activity...The commonality of the cross socio-economic community was race.”

2. Desire to be in a Black Community: All three pastors described their church as especially loving, caring and “inviting” congregations. One pastor is described by his “legacy of love given and received”. Another pastor said that his church is “like an oasis, which affirms and celebrates their black identity”. As he said, “Black people want to be in a community where they ‘don’t have to explain it’. Black people also need a place where they can talk honestly and freely with one another without concern of offending any white people.”

3. Independence from White Influence. “The desire for blacks to worship independently from whites goes back to the antebellum period. Slaves needed written permission to leave the plantations for worship, and many were permitted to attend only white churches of their master or black churches led by black pastors..... Only after emancipation could complete autonomy be called a distinguishing mark of a Negro Baptist Church.”⁹ All three pastors said that their black members were not comfortable with being a racial minority in the church as well as in the community and society, and prefer to worship in a church without white leadership and influence. “The initial impetus for black spiritual and ecclesiastical independence was not

grounded in religious doctrine or polity, but in the offensiveness of racial segregation in the churches and the alarming inconsistencies between the teachings and the expressions of the faith.”¹⁰ It was disturbing to hear comments from one of the black pastors I interviewed that “some black people have found the brand of Christianity proclaimed in predominantly white churches to be hypocritical or contradictory to the message of the gospel.” Yet I know from personal experience that this is true because of the racist comments I have heard among white ‘Christians’ in the parishes in which I have served. One of these black congregations was established in 1908 “by black Episcopalians to meet the needs of the growing numbers of black residents, who, because of fear and racial prejudice were being made unwelcome in Cambridge and Boston churches.”¹¹

There is a desire in black churches not only to be independent of white influence, but also to be autonomous. “Historically, the Black Church has been the most economically independent institution in the black community. For it does not depend upon white trustees to raise funds, to pay its pastors or erect its buildings.”¹² Independent black churches were the first effective stride toward freedom led by African Americans since *before* the Civil War. “Economic cooperation among Negroes began in the church.”¹³

4. Education: All three pastors stressed that adult and children’s education was a primary aspect of the life of their parish. A number of black lay professionals lead the adult forum between services. Cultural heritage and Black history is taught in the Sunday School for children to develop racial pride and self-esteem. This is consistent with black churches in the past. “No other area of black life received higher priority

among black churches than education....(*historically*) Sunday Schools were often the first places where black people made contact with the educational process.”¹⁴

“Probably the most crucial of all concerns is the need to bolster the personal and cultural identity and the self-esteem of black children at all socioeconomic levels.”¹⁵

The adult role models provided in black churches, among both clergy and lay leaders, have the greatest impact on the self-esteem of young black children.

- 5. Retreat from the Isolation:** All three pastors said that their parishioners say they feel isolated in their workplaces, schools and neighborhoods as the *only* or one of the *few* black employees, children in school, etc. This is confirmed by fairly recent articles in newspapers and magazines about the growth of the black middle class being ‘between two worlds’: “Middle class blacks are often relatively isolated at work, typically finding themselves greatly outnumbered by white co-workers. When the workday ends, more often than not, blacks and whites who have labored shoulder to shoulder go their separate ways. Interracial socialization off the job remains rare enough to be remarked upon when it occurs.”¹⁶ “There is some evidence that other black professionals, especially those who have worked in the white corporate world for at least a decade, tend to feel socially isolated among their white colleagues.... However, where there are enough black professionals, there has been a tendency not only to form social clubs, but also to establish churches.”¹⁷ This is the case with the black church in Framingham formed 25 five years ago as an interdenominational congregation of black Christians from Roxbury who had moved to Framingham,

where industry and higher education had attracted an increasing number of middle-income black professionals and leaders.

6. **Economic and Educational Advocacy.** In 1942, Gunnar Myrdal wrote about “The Negro Church” in his book, An American Dilemma, “The Negro Church is of importance to the power relations within the Negro community and between Negroes and whites. They bring Negroes together for a common cause. They train them for a concerted action. They provide an organized followership for Negro leaders...They provide the means by which Negro leaders and organizations, which are more directly concerned with power problems, can reach the Negro people.”¹⁸ Even today, pastor and lay leaders speak on behalf of their community in matters that affect members in public school, employment, and housing. One pastor led the efforts to raise funds and build a much needed community youth center next door to the church. Another pastor is active as an advocate for black children in the Framingham school system and assists in finding housing and jobs for parishioners and others in the community. However, another pastor said that his ministry has changed in the last few years. He is now needed more as a spiritual leader than as an advocate for the social needs of his parishioners, and that ministry to the homeless, elders and children at risk are now considered “Outreach” to the surrounding community, which is predominantly white.
7. **Desire for Unity, but not Uniformity among black Christians.** Christians today generally seem less denominationally loyal than they were in past generations. They are choosing to worship in churches which meet their individual and family’s spiritual needs. This seems to be especially true of African Americans, but for different

reasons: a desire for unity among black Christians. “The recent spotlight on black church burnings and racial reconciliation, African American religious leaders are refocusing on improving relations with one another”¹⁹ At a conference in June 1997 at Hampton University in Virginia, 5200 ministry leaders from the eight historically African American denominations gathered to discuss unity among black Christians. Jesse Battle, who organized the event said, “Fragmentation of denominations has denied us the ability to have a leader within the black community. We have to forget our individual ambitions and programs and think in terms of the whole.” Many of the parishioners at these three predominantly black congregations had come from many different Christian denominations, historically black and historically white, with a desire to worship in unity with other black Christians. Historically, the 7 or 8 mainline Black denominations were not formed because of differences in theology or doctrine, but more due to differences in polity and publishing activities. “There have been men and women throughout black history who have dared to dream that out of the black denominational pluralism, there might one day arise a unity, and perhaps an organic union and merger, so that black churches could speak with one effective voice.”²⁰ The reality of this can be seen at the black congregation in Framingham. The current pastor is Baptist, but the church is not, and the congregation does not expect its members to be from any particular tradition. The other two black congregations welcome black members from other Christian traditions, yet attempt to maintain worship traditions and ecclesiastical relationships with their particular denomination, which is predominantly white.

8. The Centrality of Faith and Belonging to a Faith Community. According to the three pastors I interviewed, they believe that faith and worship are more central to the lives of members of these congregations than they understand them to be in white congregations. The life of these black congregations has not been diminished by secular pressures and commitments as it has in suburban predominantly white churches. E.g. Weekly attendance and participation is *expected*. One pastor said he calls a family if they or one of their children was not in church on Sunday, and he preaches that families must choose faith and Sunday worship over other secular activities in their lives. A predominantly black church seems to be more of a center for social and religious activities than a predominantly white suburban church of the same size.

9. A Community Focused upon Helping Black People. Middle-income black adults who have had higher education and may be doctors, lawyers, and leaders in business can be resources and role models to those in need of help, especially poor or low-income black people. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "It is time for the Negro middle class to rise up from its stool of indifference, to retreat from its flight into unreality and to bring to full resources - its heart, its mind and its checkbook to the aid of the less fortunate brother."²¹ Two of the pastors I interviewed spoke enthusiastically of how many of the lay professionals in their churches (doctors, teachers, lawyers, engineers, etc.) were helping poorer or unemployed parishioners with job-hunting, interviewing, recommendations, advice, financial donations, etc. This may explain why some middle and high income black professionals only

initially attend predominantly white churches in the suburbs. If they have a desire to help poorer black people, they are more likely to be needed in a predominantly black church than in a predominantly white church where there may only be a few other black couples or families.

Conclusion

It is ironic that at a time when predominantly white churches say they want to welcome and incorporate new members who are people of color, black Christians are continuing to seek opportunities to worship as a black community. Is American racial history repeating itself for new reasons? Has a new black racial identity and purpose emerged? When and how will the time come when black people no longer feel isolated in their workplaces, schools and residential communities, and one's "race" no longer matters in suburban churches? The Rev. Emmet Jarrett, raised this issue in his address to the Episcopal Urban Caucus in 1995, when he said, "We will continue that focus (race and racism) until the Episcopal Church becomes a 'church for all races...a church to end racism'....and the road to victory in this struggle is for white people to 'give up being white'".²²

Positive racial attitudinal change does seem to have taken place in the black community in the last thirty years. "In the late 1960's the black community stood as a conglomeration of often contradictory interests and directions, dubiously tied together by a common mood which combined centuries of anger with new hope, increasing desperation with new confidence."²³ In the late 1990's the three predominantly black churches I visited did not seem to be "a conglomeration of contradictory interests and

directions”, but rather to have a sense of unity and affirmation. Rather than black Christians having “two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body” as W.E.B. DuBois described it in The Souls of Black Folk in 1903, the 21st century black middle-income Christian seems to be living in two worlds: **First**, the socioeconomic world which enables them to live and work among middle-income white Americans who historically have had the power and privilege in American society. **Second**, a worshipping community of black Christians who are empowering each other, providing spiritual support like an oasis in a strange uncharted sea.

The desire for separation is not to be seen as a desire for segregation, but as part of the evolving process of integration of black and white Americans. W.E.B. DuBois broke with the NAACP on an issue similar to this. “Never in the world should our fight be against association with ourselves, because by that very token we give up the whole argument that we are worth associating with.”²⁴ I have found the strength and the unity of the black worshipping community very attractive, and understand why there are a few *white* parishioners who worship at each of these three churches. Christian love abides in these churches and is manifest in so many ways from which predominantly white churches could learn.

But how can the local suburban church participate in eradicating racism? Should the church be like the culture surrounding it? Shouldn’t the church be an alternative society in which worship and education connect the Word of God to the world’s needs? Would anti-racism education within a predominantly white suburban congregation bring about change in the racial composition of its membership? Can Christians (white and

black) be trained as Anti-Racism missionaries to make changes that will dismantle racist social structure in our culture?

White Christians must first discover their own spiritual and moral need to eliminate racism in order to free themselves, as much as people of color, from the sin of racism. As Leonard Lovett describes it, “Racism is a moral and spiritual problem. It is the perverse worship of the self, rooted in spiritual pride. Racism is self-deification in its purest form. It is a decisive act of turning away from God. It is life according to the flesh. (Romans 8:5).”²⁵ Paradoxically, the people who are the object of racism and those who benefit from racism need each other. We have much to learn from each other in order to become truly human. Bishop Desmond Tutu beautifully describes our need for one another, “God is smart, making us different so that we will get to know our need of one another. We are meant to complement one another in order to be truly human and to realize the fullness of our potential to be human. After all, we are created in the image of God who is a diversity of persons who exist in ineffable unity.”²⁶ My hope is that an anti-racism education program offered to Christians in a predominantly white suburban community will motivate them to truly follow the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, who created an inclusive community of faithful people, regardless of their race, social or religious status, or gender. “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all are one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28) What follows is the result of a study of the effect of an anti-racism education on the attitudes and behaviors of suburban Christians (white and black).

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- ¹ Boston Globe article Sunday, August 24, 1997, "Focus" section, "The *new* black migration to the suburbs, by Alexander Von Hoffman
- ² Boston Globe article, July, 1997, by Alexis Chiu, cited in August 24, 1997 article.
- ³ Lincoln, C. Eric, & Mamiya, Lawrence H., The Black Church in the African American Experience, Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 1990, p. 159
- ⁴ Website information of the Union of Black Episcopalians: <http://www.AfroAnglican.org/UBE>
- ⁵ Davis, Kortright, Serving with Power, Paulist Press, New York, 1999, p. 149
- ⁶ Hodgson, Peter C., Revisioning the Church, Fortress Press, 1988, Minneapolis, MN, p. 72
- ⁷ Ahlstrom, Sydney E., A Religious History of the American People, Yale University Press, p. 1056
- ⁸ Ahlstrom, p. 710
- ⁹ Lincoln, p. 24
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 47
- ¹¹ The Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, 1784-1984, p. 66
- ¹² Lincoln, p. 241
- ¹³ Ibid., p. 244
- ¹⁴ Ibid., p. 251
- ¹⁵ Ibid., p. 402
- ¹⁶ Lacayo, Richard, "Living", *TIME*, March 13, 1989, p.62
- ¹⁷ Lincoln, p. 270
- ¹⁸ Myrdal, Gunnar, An American Dilemma, Harper Brothers Publishing, 1944, p. 858
- ¹⁹ Slone, Christopher, "Black Churches Pursue Unity, Not Uniformity", *Christianity Today*, July 14, 1997, p.64
- ²⁰ Lincoln, p. 392
- ²¹ Ibid., p. 269
- ²² Jarrett, Emmett, "Give Up Being White": The Weapons of Spiritual Warfare, To Heal The Sin-Sick Soul, Episcopal Urban Caucus, 1996, p. 45
- ²³ Louis, Debbie, as quoted in Other Sheep I Have, by the Rev. Paul Washington, p. 76
- ²⁴ Ahlstrom, p. 1071
- ²⁵ Lovett, Leonard, "Color Lines and the Religion of Racism", Ending Racism In The Church, United Church Press, Cleveland, Ohio, p. 24
- ²⁶ Tutu, Desmond, An African Prayer Book, Doubleday, New York, 1995, p. xiv

“In a true dialogue, both sides are willing to change. We have to appreciate that truth can be received from outside of – not only within – our own group. If we do not believe that, entering into dialogue would be a waste of time. If we think we monopolize the truth and we still organize a dialogue, it is not authentic. We have to believe that by engaging in dialogue with the other person, we have the possibility of making a change within ourselves, that we can become deeper. Dialogue is not a means for assimilation in the sense that one side expands and incorporates the other into its “self”. Dialogue must be practiced on the basis of “non-self”. We have to allow what is good, beautiful, and meaningful in the other’s tradition to transform us.”

Living Buddha, Living Christ, Thich Nhat Hanh (Buddhist monk and writer)

Chapter Two: Design of the Program, Methodology of the Study, Findings and Interpretation

This chapter is a study of the experiences of participants in a church-based educational program on anti-racism. I was interested in learning what these participants thought about the program, if it informed and motivated them to change their own racial attitudes and behaviors, and/or if it equipped them to initiate changes in their workplace, church, school or communities. The program, “The Martin Luther King, Jr. Dialogues on Anti-Racism”, was designed by a task force on Anti-Racism of the national Episcopal Church in 1996 and has been used in many locations around the country. It was originally designed for use in the congregations of the Episcopal diocese of Massachusetts and was endorsed by the Massachusetts Council of Churches. Congregations which originally offered the program were expected to have a leader and facilitators who had been trained by the diocese of Massachusetts Anti-Racism Task Force or the Massachusetts Council of Churches. The program is now being used by other denominations and facilitator training is available through the Anti-Racism Committee of the national Episcopal Church.

The program consists of five sequential dialogues using a prepared curriculum with small and large group exercises and discussions on diversity, prejudice, racism, social analysis and finally, the development of a vision and plan of action to help eliminate racism. The purpose of the program is to elicit a common understanding of the way racism works in our society. The approach is experiential rather than didactic. The structure of the program encourages participants to engage in personal reflection on racism and integration of new knowledge into their personal lives. The program was held in Weston, Massachusetts and sponsored by the Weston Clergy Association. I had

previously participated in this program at another parish and took the training with the Massachusetts Council of Churches in order to offer and facilitate the program in my current parish.

Since the dialogues are intended to be ecumenical and interracial, I knew it was strategically wiser and more effective to offer the program to the local community and invite other churches to participate as well. So I offered to coordinate the program with the churches in Weston. The clergy and parishioners of four Weston churches participated. The program was also publicized throughout the western and northwestern suburbs of Boston (Region Two of the Episcopal diocese). (See Appendix p. 1, 2, 3) Parishioners from Episcopal congregations in Wayland, Waltham, Lowell and Concord also participated. A biracial team of clergy and laity led the program, one of whom was the Rev. Canon Ed Rodman, who had helped to develop the curriculum being used.

As an Episcopal priest in charge of a large congregation in an affluent suburban town of Boston, I wanted to study the effect of this church-based anti-racism education program on the participants. My first hope is to contribute to the elimination of racism in our town and area by providing educational and interracial opportunities for members of my congregation and for residents in and around Weston. My initial fears included criticism from the lay leadership of my congregations or dealing with conflict within my congregation over a contemporary issue, which some parishioners expressed as “political and potentially controversial”. Having the support of the local clergy association and participants from several churches helped to show my congregation the significance of

the issue of racism and my commitment to eliminating racism, all of which later helped the program to have an impact with public school administration and town officials.

My understanding is that prejudice and racist attitudes and behaviors are learned, and are not inherent in our human nature. It is not instinctive or necessary for our survival to separate ourselves from members of our own genus and species. Therefore, racism can gradually be eliminated in our society when individuals gain new insight and personal experiences with people who appear to be different than them and see themselves in the other's eyes. The group exercises and discussions in the program enable participants to get in touch with their early experiences of prejudice, and to analyze and deconstruct the racist social structures in which they live and move. As a person of faith in God of justice revealed to us through the love of Jesus Christ toward all, I know that the Hebrew and Christian scriptures teach us that humanity is one and that we are all children of God, but we have sinfully divided ourselves. "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in our flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that, the hostility between us." (Ephesians 2:13-14, NRSV)

Racism is rooted in the sin of pride and exclusivity, which assumes 'that my kind and I are superior to others and therefore deserve special privileges'.¹ The mission of the Church is "to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ".² Yet the Church has functioned like other institutions in society and is as racially homogeneous as the communities in which they reside and serve. Churches are currently caught in a self-perpetuating system that was created by past decisions that are difficult, but not

impossible, to change, e.g., prejudice in employment practices in the selection of public school teachers, police and fire departments. Churches have a scriptural mandate to celebrate the diversity of its membership so that the process of unifying humankind and ending racism can begin in the Church. “Unifying humankind is dependent on men and women understanding and internalizing the principle of oneness of humankind.... Racism is basically a spiritual problem; that the church - black and white - has failed as a bridge-builder between the races; that education has inadvertently promulgated racism; that denial plagues blacks as well as whites; and that if no way is found to resolve the black-white conflict, an African-American rebellion will erupt across the land - this time no one will be safe.”³

I am aware that employers and schools offer “diversity training” and other forms of anti-racism education, but my research question is to discover if a program written and sponsored by a church has any particular effect on the lives of participants. What kind of effect? I.e., how does *this* program affect *these* people? “Multicultural education believes in assimilation of its component cultures into a social consensus with shared values.”⁴ Diversity training aims to help people to work or learn together in harmony. But anti-racism education is aimed at changing the social structures that separate people and perpetuate injustice. Therefore, I am interested in discovering what motivates people of faith to participate in anti-racism education. Do they believe that their Christian faith demands that they respond to injustice and racism? Does the setting of the program in a church have any particular effect on their participation? What is it like for them to be in dialogue with people who have had different experiences of racism? Does their

participation in the dialogues motivate them to make changes on their daily life and work? If so, what?

My second hope is that studying the experiences of participants in the program will help to evaluate the effectiveness of this program. Anti-racism education is relatively new to the Episcopal Church and to other Protestant denominations. This curriculum, although designed by the Episcopal Church, is being used as a model in the development of anti-racism educational programs in other Protestant denominations. But there is little evaluative information on the outcomes achieved or the effect that these programs have on eliminating racism in their communities. Knowing the multiple reasons why people participate and how they apply what they learn would enable those who design the program to adjust the curriculum accordingly.

My second fear was that the program would conclude without any commitment to continue the process of dialogue or develop an action plan. I have participated in other adult education programs on contemporary issues offered by the Church and rarely observed an action plan developed in response. Unfortunately, our culture has been conditioned to learn new information and not be expected to respond. "Television has habituated its watchers to a low information-action ratio, that people are accustomed to "learning" good ideas (even from sermons) and then doing nothing about them."⁵

The Anti-Racism Program Design and Demographic Description of the Participants

The program itself involves a series of five 5-6 hour gatherings, called Models, in which the exercises and the material develop and progress from 1) Diversity Awareness 2) Prejudice Reduction, 3) Social Construction, 4) Anti-Oppression, and lastly, 5)

Institutional Racism and Social Reconstruction. (See Appendix p. 4, 5) Model one was offered in April 1998, two in June 1998, and three in October 1998. Models four and five were offered in January and February 1999. There were 45 participants in the first two dialogues, 30 in model three, and 22 in models four and five. In each dialogue 80% of the participants were white and 20% were black.

An Anti-Racism Action Group of 15 people from four churches was formed after the conclusion of the last model. That group renamed itself “Interfaith Citizens Advocating Racial Equality” (ICARE) and hosted the first Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Breakfast in Weston on January 17, 2000. (See Appendix p. 20) Over one hundred people attended, including the Superintendent of Public Schools, members of the School Committee, Police Chief, Town Selectman, State Senator and Representatives, and a keynote speaker. Proceeds from the breakfast established two awards, which will be given to two high school seniors who exemplify the character and vision of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. There are plans to host this event annually. ICARE is represented on the local METCO Coordinating Committee in Weston. METCO, Inc. (Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity), a state funded voluntary desegregation program initiated in 1966. It seeks to eliminate racial imbalance in public schools by providing educational opportunities for Boston students of color in predominantly white suburban towns. Towns, which volunteer to incorporate Boston students into their schools, are reimbursed. Members of ICARE recently spoke at the State House of Representatives at the annual METCO Awareness Day to advocate for increased state funding. METCO has

been level funded for 17 years despite the increase in cost of living. (See Appendix p. 19 for letter sent to State Legislature)

Anti-Racism Educational Theory

- Racism is a socially constructed reality. The human race, “Homo sapiens”, is one race. Separate races do not exist within the human species. Society has identified, sorted and grouped people by skin color (and not, for example, by the color of eyes or hair). “Human blood is another proof that people everywhere, regardless of skin color, hair texture and geographical location, belong to the same species, the same family. Four blood types (A, B, AB, and O) are found in all human ethnic groups.”⁶ God created the “humankind”. Human beings created the concept of ‘race’. Only when “race” means “humankind” in its diversity will it be a valid biological and theological construct. “The common goal should be the dismantling of the ‘idea’ of race, when the color of a person’s skin is no more important than the color of their eyes.”⁷ Skin color does not identify biological inequality. Yet we live in a country which thrived economically in its founding century because of racism – slavery, the genocide of indigenous people, and the underpaid labor of many ethnic groups. “Simply put, whites can’t accept the fact that their country is fundamentally racist; and because they have been brought up in that kind of environment, they have been infected.”⁸ Racist structures are a distortion of a just democracy and can be dismantled to the benefit of all. But white fear of losing unearned privileges and excess material resources contributes to the perpetuation of racist structures.

- Racism is prejudice plus power.⁹ To be racially prejudiced means to have distorted opinions about people with skin color different than one's own. Racism goes beyond prejudice. It is backed up by power. Racism is the power to enforce one's prejudice. Racism requires that a group of people whose skin color is different than the people in power be identified as *another race*, which is inferior to their race or skin color. "Without the presence of black people in America, European-Americans would not be "white" - they would be only Irish, Italians, Poles, Welsh and others engaged in class, ethnic and gender struggles over resources and identity."¹⁰ Dominance is experienced, internalized and institutionalized by those with power.

- Oppression is experienced and internalized by those without power. At a certain stage in racial identity development, individuals of color attempt to assimilate into the dominant "white" group by de-emphasizing characteristics that might identify them as members of the perceived inferior group. This strategy has limited usefulness and may lead to hopelessness when experience reveals that no amount of behavior change can conceal the color of their skin. "Nihilism is the lived experience of coping with a life of horrifying meaninglessness, hopelessness, and (most important) lovelessness. The frightening result is a numbing detachment from others and a self-destructive disposition toward the world. ...The major enemy of black survival in America has been and is neither oppression nor exploitation, but rather the nihilistic threat - that is, loss of hope and absence of meaning."¹¹

- Racism is learned and therefore can be unlearned. Racism is learned in family and personal relationships, and reinforced by the societal structures. The key to

unlearning racism is to create a social, spiritual and political climate that fosters attitudinal change. The “Martin Luther King, Jr. Dialogues on Anti-Racism” create an experience of dissonance between what the participant already knows and new information gained through dialogue with people with different experiences of racism. This dissonance may lead to new insight, but not necessarily motivation to change one’s personal life or the societal structures that perpetuate racism. The dialogues are designed to be used in sequence because the information learned from each dialogue builds on the learning experiences of the previous dialogues.

- Unconscious racial attitudes and behavior can be made conscious. People can be made aware of their unconscious behavior and its affect on others through the experience of dissonance (when personal assumptions come in conflict with new experience or information). The exercises in the program are designed to provide face to face sharing and listening to experiences of racism. The exercises are not intended to make people uncomfortable, but to ask them to reflect on their past experiences and how they learned what they learned about prejudice and racism. “Most white American equate racism with the activities of the Ku Klux Klan, the Skinheads or neo-Nazis who direct acts of violence at people of color. They don’t realize that the disease manifests itself in more subtle ways, in the form of an attitude that triggers behavior they deem natural.”¹²

- Social change begins with the individual who transforms his or her social relationships. Federal legislation prohibits discrimination in education, the workplace and in housing contracts. But social change begins with interpersonal relationships. “The politics of conversion proceeds principally on the local level - in those institutions in civil

society still vital enough to promote self-worth and self-affirmation.”¹³ Christians and Jews have a scriptural mandate “to love your neighbor as yourself”. The Church has a responsibility to provide education that will empower Christians to work for justice and peace among all people. The assumption and hope is that social change can begin with a group of informed Christians who are committed to advocating racial equality in their community.

- Interracial dialogue is essential to eliminating racism. It has been my experience that I learn about myself by listening to how others experience me. The program implicitly assumes that white adults will learn more about being “white” through dialogue with persons of color, and adult persons of color will learn more about being “of color” by listening to white adults talk about their experience of people of color. The exercises are designed without reference to racial groups. Although diversity of participants enhances the learning experience, the program does not assume that there will be dialogue between “blacks” and “whites”. It is not designed that people of color will teach white people about racism, but that together they will reach a common understanding that racism diminishes all of us. “For a clear *majority* of white Americans, blacks represent the appropriate racial/ethnic minority reference group. But for many whites, other racial/ethnic groups serve the same function.”¹⁴ My hope is that participants are motivated to learn about themselves and how they can make changes in their personal lives with regard to racism that would help them to recognize and eliminate the social structures that support and perpetuate racism. “Those illusory but oppressive walls must be broken down. And nothing does that better than the experience of listening directly to

the people on the other side of the wall. Getting close enough to see, hear, touch, smell and taste the reality of others is what always makes the difference. In listening to the stories of those so seemingly different from us, we find similar but unexpressed voices inside of ourselves.”¹⁵ Therefore, interracial dialogues are essential in anti-racism education.

Research Setting, Sample and Data Collection Method

After receiving the endorsement of the local clergy association and the support of the Episcopal churches in the Region, I mailed information to each church and invited participants to attend the first dialogue. In the letter I included information about my project and explained that I would be interested in interviewing participants who completed the five dialogues. (See Appendix p. 17) Of the 22 people who completed the program, 17 people are white and 5 are people of color. Twelve of the 22 participants who completed the program volunteered to be interviewed, including 6 parishioners from my congregation. Four of the 12 interviewees were people of color, and 8 are white. The age range of the interviewees was between 45 and 75 years old. Seven were women and 5 were men. I met with them either as married couples or as individuals for a total of ten 30-minute interviews in my office at the church. (See Appendix p. 18 for Interview questions) The interviews were recorded and then later transcribed. I coded and categorized the 10 transcribed interviews qualitatively. Specifically, I evaluated the participants' statements that revealed information about:

1 - their motivation to participate

2 - previous anti-racism education E.g., diversity training, multicultural education

- # 3 - the influence of the location and sponsorship of the program by a church
- # 4 - their experience of participating
- # 5 – the influence of their Christian faith on their experience
- # 6 - their personal insights about themselves through participation in the program
- # 7 - their understanding or insights about racism
- # 8 - the effect of their participation on their behavior in their personal or work relationships
- # 9 - their hopes for the program or suggestions to improve the program
- # 10 – characteristics typical of particular stages of racial identity development

Summary of Findings:

Participants were all busy, active people who had made personal sacrifices of time and scheduling in order to participate in the program, which met on five Saturday mornings for 5 hours each. Several participants described arrangements they had to make in order to participate: “I have a paper route, and I had to get someone else to deliver the papers on Saturday mornings.” “I’m usually busy with my family on Saturday mornings.” The people interviewed were eager to share their experience of participating in the anti-racism dialogues. Seven volunteered and five were asked, but they enthusiastically agreed. It was apparent from all the interviews that the program had a significant impact on the lives of the participants.

From the interviews emerged these **key findings**:

- A. Many participants had had previous diversity training or anti-racism education, but said they were “starved for this stuff” and eager to “keep up with it”.
- B. Confidence in the leadership was a significant factor in their willingness to attend the first dialogue and continue with the remaining four dialogues.
- C. The dialogues created a community of white anti-racists (allies) who share a common language and support one another in their efforts.
- D. The location and sponsorship of the program in a church were essential factors in the participants’ willingness to enroll and commit to the program.
- E. Personal Christian faith was a motivating and sustaining influence on the participants’ experience and commitment to the program
- F. The participants successfully embraced a community-wide approach.
- G. The dialogues provided opportunities for self-knowledge and “retreat from an isolation” of knowing people only like themselves.
- H. There is a desire to be in community with people whose experiences of racism are different than their own.
- I. The presentations, exercises and discussions influenced the white participants’ understanding about racism and revealed their own unconscious racist attitudes
- J. The program’s intention of developing an action plan at the conclusion was an important factor in the participants’ continued commitment to the program.
- K. The program provided participants with a “a way to communicate” about racism with people beyond the dialogues and “a way to enter the process of eliminating racism”.

Explanation of the Findings

A. Previous experience with anti-racism education was not unusual

Many participants had had previous diversity training or anti-racism education and were looking for more opportunities to learn about racism. They are “adult learners” who wanted to gain greater confidence in addressing racism in their workplace, neighborhood or church. One black woman remarked, “I’ve been in Diversity Training at work. They didn’t really hit racism itself – just that ‘we’re diverse’. That just doesn’t do it. It doesn’t get into it deep enough.” A white teacher eagerly described his motivation, “I would have signed up for anything of this sort, partly for professional reasons, due to being a teacher...I have to constantly engage in this kind of thinking and conversation and dialogue in order to be an effective teacher.”

Anti-racism education creates a community of people who share common language and experience, and who also know that they will “slip back” if they do not stay involved in anti-racism education and action groups. One white woman who had been involved in several anti-racism educational programs during her years as a teacher said, “I need to always be involved in some kind of anti-racism education or a dialogue, or a gathering with people of color. It keeps me aware and conscious of the disease of racism, kind of like going to an AA meeting. You have to keep going in order not to slip back.” An older black man who had been involved in the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960’s said, “Whenever there’s a chance for a community dialogue, I’m there, especially on racism.” A continuing theme was how easily one can return to previous attitudes and behavior after completing some sort of anti-racism education. “I’ve done other anti-racism

education before. It's a process I have to keep up with because of my past experiences. (The program) is definitely a learning factor that I'm using to *get back on track*."

Yet one participant interviewed expressed some disappointment that the dialogues "hadn't attracted many people who *needed* anti-racism education. Most of those who came were already sensitive to these issues." The program seems to serve the purpose of creating a community of people who are faithfully searching for a way to respond to a call to eliminate racism, but have "difficulty doing it alone". Additional approaches are needed to motivate more people who have had no previous anti-racism education to participate in the dialogues. The ICARE group is developing a shorter curriculum, a "taste and see" approach that might wet their appetite for a fuller experience. It will be used at a Sunday morning adult-youth education hour for 4 sessions.

B. Confidence in the leadership was essential

A majority of the participants interviewed reported that the trustworthiness, integrity and credibility of the leaders of the program were important in their willingness to sign-up and attend the first dialogue. Several said that they signed up for this program because "I knew the people who were leading it." Or "I wanted to support the clergy leading it, and (as Senior Warden) to be aware of potential controversy for it has a potentially political agenda." A few white participants remarked that they expected the leaders (black and white clergy) to preach or lecture on racism, and were initially fearful of feeling guilty or angry. But they continued in the dialogues when they realized that the group was going to teach each other about racism and its painful effects in everyone's lives, white and black. Leadership in the dialogues is more effective when the leaders

exercise their authority in a way that helps other people claim their authority. Servant leadership is best expressed in building up the people to be leaders themselves, for the transformation of the participants is the task.

But emotional dependence on and admiration of the leaders may be an energy drain on the leaders and misdirect the energy of the participants. Leaders who are perceived as the energy behind the effectiveness of the program may fail to motivate the participants to act independently. As the saying goes, ‘no good deed goes unpunished.’ Comments such as, “The leaders kept me coming; they were great. The program itself was good” or “I’m not a member of this church, but I know (the leaders) and I like what (they’re) doing”, may also be a form of resistance to the participants’ process of examining their own racial attitudes and behaviors. This is similar to the co-dependent friend or family member of an alcoholic who focuses their energy on the behavior of a recovering alcoholic and denies the personal effect that the disease of alcoholism has had on them.

C. The dialogues created a community of white anti-racists (allies)

The comments about the importance of leadership also revealed the need for white anti-racist role models and allies in the elimination of white unconscious racist behavior. One white woman told me, “But one of the reasons that I’m involved in this dialogue is that *you* are offering it. I was so impressed that you were offering it in a town which is about as “white” as you can get, and racism is never discussed.” A white man from another town came because, “I happened to be at a meeting when you were there, announcing that you were offering this program. I was intrigued that white adults were meeting to discuss racism.” White anti-racist people need white allies for courage.

Representatives from two other anti-racism groups from adjacent towns attended the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Breakfast sponsored by ICARE. These groups were also small (12-15 people) and composed mostly of white people who are searching for additional white allies in their anti-racism efforts. Each group asked if they could work together with ICARE. Each group has a vision that goes beyond their town to eliminate racism and was looking for regional support.

D. Location and sponsorship by a church made a difference

Framing the dialogues in a worshipful and prayerful way helped create a safe and sacred environment that encouraged participants to share their experiences of racism. They described an “expected level of trust”, “it’s safe”, that “you can talk more freely” in the church, and that “The workplace is never safe”. Two participants described their expectation that “the church is where the motivation is clear and understood...a common understanding”; that “that the Church will take on society’s ills, such as racism.” And a hopeful assumption that, “Where else can you work on doing the impossible, but the church!”

Several people shared their suspicion of the motivation of other institutions to offer anti-racism education. “If it were done by the town I would wonder why they’re doing it.” And, “I heard about it through my church and that said it would be worthwhile. If it had been offered by a civic organization, I might not have participated because politics are usually involved, and the program would not be as genuine or long-lasting.” “(I was) happy to be with a group of people of faith talking about the problem. The schools are not teaching anti-racism, and I’m looking to the church to teach and talk about racism.” Now

that the ICARE group has sponsored a well-attended Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Breakfast for the town of Weston, politicians and town officials now want *our* support in promoting anti-racism efforts in the schools. As Cornel West describes, “The politics of conversion proceeds principally on the local level – in those institutions in civil society still vital enough to promote self-worth and self-affirmation. It surfaces on the state and national levels only when grass-roots democratic organizations put forward a collective leadership that has earned the love and respect of and, most important, has proved itself accountable to these organizations.”¹⁶

E. The influence of Christian faith was significant

In addition to the curriculum, leadership and location of the program being church-based, the faith of the participants was a significant factor in their commitment to the program. There were comments such as, “My faith supported me in the dialogues. We started and ended each session with prayer.” And, “My faith is the bottom line. It’s not Christian to treat people the way white people have treated black people. It’s what my faith is all about: instead of spreading hate, you spread love, and you try to undo hate.”

Some participants became quite energized in their response to the interview question, “How did your faith motivate or influence your participation?” One white woman proclaimed, “You can’t come to Church and say, ‘For one hour I’m going to think about my faith.’ and then not fight what’s against my faith in the world.” A white man said, “I’m sort of a social gospel person, you can’t be a Christian without working at it in some way.” Another white woman proudly said, “We ‘respect the dignity of every human being’. If you call yourself a Christian, that’s what you’re attempting to do.”

“How can anyone call himself or herself a Christian and not be motivated to be involved in this issue!” Clearly, living out their Christian faith was a strong motive in their participation in the dialogues and the source of their hope of eliminating racism.

Yet another man talked about how much his faith had been challenged during the dialogues because of new ways he now understood Christianity, “Sometimes the discussions challenged my understanding of the Christian faith. I didn’t know much before about how the command to love one another was related to anti-racism.” No one interviewed mentioned that their priest or a sermon had motivated them to participate in the dialogues or had taught them that it was our Christian responsibility to eliminate racism. Clearly, the Church’s mission (BCP, p. 855) is not as well known as we assume.

F. A community-wide approach was successfully embraced by the participants

It is essential that the suburban participants become aware of the effect of racism *within its community*. Suburban communities tend to consider racism an “urban issue”, and not relevant to their lives. I coordinated another anti-racism education program in my previous congregation and had difficulty drawing many parishioners to participate. When I began to personally encourage individuals to attend, several faithful parishioners told me they were not interested because “it’s (racism) irrelevant to me, people who live in the city need this, not us here.” No action plan developed from that program, although 15 parishioners did attend 6 evening sessions. Apparently, ‘where you end up depends on where you started’. If the participants are all from one congregation, the group’s vision will probably be limited to ‘locale’ rather than recognizing “systemic racism”.

From that experience I learned to bring residents of the town and members of other churches together, and to address racism as a *community issue* rather than a particular congregation's issue. The results have been more significant using a town and regional approach, and those interviewed talked about the meaning of this approach for them, "So the fact that you set it up on a community basis was exciting, and particularly with other churches involved. After all, it's the community that needs Anti-Racism Training. It's huge!" "What motivated me to participate...was working (on racism) in this community." Another Weston resident responded, "Because it was in the community I live in and it was here." A program based in a person's residential area helps them to relate the learning experience to their personal lives, and incidents in their town or schools. Several participants related their awareness of racist attitudes among their friends and neighbors, town officials, in the school system, and in the police department.

The outcome of this particular program resulted in the ICARE group and illustrates that if you start on an ecumenical, regional basis, the vision will be ecumenical and regional. The ICARE group has met with the Superintendent of schools in Weston several times to support his efforts to bring EMI (Empowering Multicultural Initiatives) courses for educators for developing and implementing effective anti-racist practices and programs in the classrooms.

G. Dialogues create opportunities for participants to learn about themselves

The group process and exercises of the program provide opportunities for self-knowledge and interaction with the *other* 'race'. All participants interviewed said that they were eager to learn more about themselves, about racism, and curious about what

others would share in the discussions. Listening to others and sharing their experiences of racism were essential aspects of the program. Sharing was not always easy or comfortable; “fear is an important part of the process.” One white man said, “There is nothing worse than being embarrassed, you feel like such a fool when you get ‘caught out.’” When I asked what being ‘caught out’ meant, he explained, “saying the wrong thing; not knowing the origin or meaning of a particular word or an expression to a black person; or trying to connect with a black person by using ‘black’ expressions.” There is also risk on the part of people of color who speak up in the dialogues. One black woman shared that, “It felt risky to be open, but I appreciated everyone’s willingness to be vulnerable.” A white man said, “You learn from these experiences... I grew.”

Trust in the leadership, the process and the group continued to grow with each model. A black man said, “What kept me going was continuing to share. I don’t have many places where I can talk about my experience of being black with a white person.” When I asked a white woman about her experience of participating and “What did you discover about yourself, did you notice any changes in yourself?”, she responded, “I couldn’t help but change, because I understand more... I learned that it’s (racism) a white problem that white people aren’t going to feel unless they are in the presence of people of color.” A white man said, “I thought it would be fun, too, to learn something about myself... What I learned is that it sure has been ‘easy being a white guy’ – *so far!* We really should be able in our society to make everybody’s life as easy as mine has been.”

The dialogues provide a “retreat from isolation”: isolation from opportunities to talk about racism with people who share the same ground rules and from people who have

would have had different experiences of racism than themselves. “The workplace doesn’t have our “ground rules” to help people talk about race... so that there is agreement on how you’re going to talk about it.” And, “Nobody ever has an opportunity to explore the issue of race in any kind of way other than *idle* conversation.... I’ve learned that you have to have some kind of formal context, otherwise the conversation almost becomes retrogressive...because you realize that the person you’re talking to isn’t going to listen to you... Or the conversation gets in the way of a friendship.”

A few white interviewees talked about feeling “isolated” in their everyday life from persons of color, and wanting to be in dialogue. One white man said, “We did that sharing thing, I say three things, you say three things, back and forth. It was very good, but I feel I haven’t suffered... My family hasn’t come through horrible situations. I feel gratitude, but know that it was luck, and sometimes I feel ‘out of it’... You feel like you haven’t lived life... I haven’t a story to tell... I feel isolated from those who can show me what really matters.” A white woman talked about hearing what a black woman thought about white people, “I wondered what she would say to me about her experience of racism. It was hard to hear...I wouldn’t have done what someone did to her, and I felt guilty for being ‘white’. I wouldn’t have known what it meant to be seen as ‘white’ if she hadn’t told me her story.”

The need for dialogue between white people and people of color has been expressed by a number of well-known authors and leaders of Anti-Racism education. “We have been trying to solve the wrong problem. For years, we have been trying to change the wrong people. With the best of intentions we were aiming in the wrong direction....

Concerned people, in the firm belief that racial problems must be solved and racial conflicts reconciled, have devoted time, effort, and money to help Native Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and African-Americans with their problems....Our assumption is that if we pour enough money into changing the victims of racism, they'll catch up with us and will achieve a state of equality. But it isn't happening. And why? Because we are trying to change the wrong people."¹⁷

H. Social interaction between white people and people of color is desired

In addition to the intended education about racism, a community of people developed which enjoyed being together. The experiences of getting to know one another, eating meals together, and talking about our daily lives were as meaningful as the exercises. White participants said they wanted more time and opportunity to interact with people of color in the program. "It wasn't so much the exercises as the *people, interacting with people*." "Once you get over your natural initial reluctance to get involved with someone who seems different, you become aware of him or her as a *person*. When you open yourself to people who seem different from you, to become inclusive, *you gain so much*." New friendships were made.

The desire of the white respondents to be in dialogue with people of color was also expressed in their response to the interview question about their hope or suggestions to improve the program. "There should be a black person in every small group exercise or more people of color participating." And, "We need more time in the exercises and more social interaction between white people and people of color." But these statements could also express their expectation that the role of black participants is to teach the white

participants about racism, or that racism could be eliminated if more black people were willing to engage in dialogue. This last possible interpretation is reflective of Barndt's comment on previous page about "trying to change the wrong people."

Several white participants expressed a sense of being isolated from people of color in their daily lives. Recognizing their isolation is an important step in white racial identity development (Disintegration - described in the next chapter) and a motivation to "give up being white". These comments illustrate Hess' statement that "Sustained contact with communities who do not benefit from the language of white supremacy is crucial in this journey (of anti-racism education/efforts)."¹⁸ This is related to the earlier mentioned desire of white participants to "keep going in order not to slip back" into white unearned privileged behavior.

Interracial fellowship and sharing a meal together are also essential for community-building and developing trust among the participants. Several of those interviewed (both white and people of color) thought that more time together would make the experience more meaningful. "We need to be in dialogue. To ignore oneness, and stress diversity and multiculturalism can only lead to sophisticated apartheid."¹⁹ Developing a community of trust where participants can feel safe to share their experiences and allow themselves to be vulnerable to hearing the experiences of others is essential to the developmental process of the dialogues.

I. The curriculum provided new information, which affected attitudinal change.

Several of those interviewed talked about what they had learned about racism and new awareness of racist behavior from the Definitions (See Appendix p. 6, 7). One white

woman whose family were from Virginia said, “(The program) made me more aware of my heritage and my responsibility. My father’s family had slaves, and I was brought up a racist. (I participated because) I wanted to learn that about myself and how the world works, I see that as an ongoing responsibility. ... One of the things I’ve been doing since I read Slaves in the Family is to start a chat on the internet. I want to start an organization called ADOSO, which means “Adult Descendents Of Slave Owners. We need to work on ourselves, to apologize as a group.” Another white woman who grew up in North Carolina said, “I knew that I would benefit (from the program), given my southern roots. I grew up in the South and saw blacks as “other” and wasn’t allowed to go anywhere blacks were. I never thought about it. I lived in it and didn’t see it. I didn’t know or feel close to a black person until I was in college. I learned about racism when I came here, and from my interactions with the diocese. I ‘get it’ that I’m *white*. Now I want to learn when, where and how can I enter into a situation and help.” A black woman was pleasantly surprised by the experience of the dialogues, “The experience was extremely powerful – a nucleus of people returning each time. People didn’t mind saying what was on their minds, and I said what was on mine. Everyone learned from the exercises – people didn’t leave.” Good news for all.

J. The intention of developing an action plan was positive

Knowing that the program would extend over a period of months with the possibility of developing an action plan was said to be an incentive to participate and continue in the program. Most of the participants had a “commitment to change” both their own attitudes and to help to make behavioral changes in their families, communities, schools and

workplaces. “I like what (the program) produced, the outcome. I felt empowered to speak up personally.” A married couple said, “We’ve always been committed to giving back something to society to help people in whatever way we can... That aspect of it was there before we started the program.” Several of those interviewed were determined to develop an action plan from the beginning of the program. A black woman said, “It was important to me that this group was going to continue.” A white woman said, “What kept me coming was my faith that something could be done, that we would start to do something.” Announcing that the intention of the program is to do something to eliminate racism in our community may have attracted those looking for an action group or organized efforts. This intention may also have contributed to the decrease in numbers of participants after the first two models. During the fifth and last model a lot of ideas and energy was generated to form an action plan and a group to continue to meet. E.g. work with the public schools on developing an anti-racism program for youth; work with local housing board to develop or protect mixed income housing in towns involved in the group.

K. The exercises in the dialogues prepared the participants to speak and to act beyond the dialogues.

The experience of participating in the program changed attitudes and motivated those interviewed to make changes in their communities. Several participants said that the Definition of terms used was one of the tools they use to communicate with others about racism. One black woman said, “I shared them (Definitions) with people at work. I drove them crazy with “this is what I learned, think about it.” Just like I drove them crazy with the WWJD (What would Jesus do?)”. A few participants reported that they had taken the

“Understanding Privilege” exercise (See Appendix p. 11, 12, 13) to their friends and co-workers as a way to make them aware of the continued existence of racism in our culture. The exercise “Personal Inventory” (See Appendix p. 16) helped participants to identify moments and experiences of discrimination in their own past, which helped them to recognize the discrimination of others in their present situations.

One white couple from Lowell participated and could not continue with the action group formed at the conclusion of the program but developed their own action plan. He works in the Mortgage and Loan Department of a bank and said, “I wanted to learn for my own benefit, but I also hoped through the process of learning that I’d be able to do something constructive and useful in the world that I interact with.” He has taken his experience to his workplace and has challenged the pattern of refusing mortgages to applicants who are Hispanic. He said the experience of participating in the dialogues gave him confidence to speak up knowledgeably at work, and he is searching for another anti-racism group near his home to support his efforts. One black woman has now become a member of the diocesan Anti-Racism Task Force and the secretary of her Deanery. She has also become more positive, outgoing and self-confident in her interactions within her predominantly white congregation.

From the interviews I conclude that the experience of participating in the Anti-Racism Dialogues is positive. The initial goal was to eliminate racism within the congregations represented in the dialogues and working through the Church to eliminate racism in society. But the result was the formation of a group of people prepared and

eager to work toward eliminating racism in the community and the metropolitan area, and then to go back to their congregation and spread the word. Eliminating racism within the congregation may need to be an “inside→ outside→ inside process”. The congregations represented by members of the ICARE group are now curious and interested in participating after the successful Martin Luther King Day Breakfast. The group recognizes that they need ways to recruit others to work with them, but there is reluctance to include new participants in the group who haven’t shared a similar anti-racism educational experience. An additional Saturday morning event is being planned by the ICARE group to provide another educational dialogue to recruit new members of this advocacy group.

¹ “The Sin of Racism” – A Pastoral Letter, House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church, March 1994

² Book of Common Prayer, Catechism of the Episcopal Church, p. 855

³ Rutstein, Nathan, Healing Racism in America. Whitcomb Publishing, Inc., Springfield, MA, 1993, p. 8

⁴ Grinter, R., “Multicultural or anti-racist education? The need to choose.” Cultural Diversity and the schools: Education for cultural diversity. London, The Falmer Press, 1992

⁵ Dawn, Marva, Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down, Eerdmans Publishing, 1995, p. 21

⁶ Rutstein, p. 38

⁷ Marable, Manning, paper - “Race, Difference and the Historical Imagination”, given at Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, MA, January 1998

⁸ Rutstein, p. 18

⁹ Barndt, Joseph, Dismantling Racism, Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis, MN, 1991, p. 28

¹⁰ West, Cornel, Race Matters, Vantage Books, New York, NY, 1994, p. 156

¹¹ Ibid., p. 23

¹² Rutstein, p. 7

¹³ Ibid., p. 30

¹⁴ Rowe et al. “White Racial Identity Models”, *Counseling Psychologist*, Vol. 22, No. 1, Jan. 1994, p. 132

¹⁵ Wallis, Jim, “The Soul of Politics”, *Sojourners magazine*, cited in Episcopal Church’s National Dialogue on Anti-Racism, n.p.

¹⁶ West, p. 30

¹⁷ Barndt, p. 37

¹⁸ Hess, Mary, “White Religious Educators and Unlearning Racism: Can we find a way?”, *Religious Education*, Vol. 93, No. 1, Winter 1998, p. 124

¹⁹ Rutstein, p. 124

“Never have I witnessed such sincere hospitality and the overwhelming spirit of true brotherhood as is practiced by people of all colors and races here in this Ancient Holy Land... You may be shocked by these words coming from me. But on this pilgrimage, what I have seen, and experienced, has forced me to *re-arrange* much of my thought patterns previously held, and to *toss aside* some of my previous conclusions... I have eaten from the same plate, drunk from the same glass, and slept in the same bed while praying to the *same* God – with fellow Muslims, whose eyes were the bluest of blue, whose hair was the blondest of blond, and whose skin was the whitest of white... We were truly all the same – because their belief in one God removed the ‘white’ from their *minds*, the ‘white’ from their *behavior*, and the ‘white’ from their *attitude*... I could see from this, that perhaps if white Americans could accept the Oneness of God, then perhaps, too, they could accept in reality the Oneness of Man – and cease to measure, and hinder, and harm others in terms of their ‘differences’ in color.” – Malcolm X, 1964

in a letter written to his wife from Mecca, as told to Alex Haley in The Autobiography of Malcolm X

Chapter Three: How adults learn and how they learn about ‘race’

In order to further evaluate and interpret the experiences of participants in an educational program on racism, it is necessary to understand *how adults learn* and *how they learn about race*. Both are of interest in the evaluation process which begins with the question, “why are the participants in the program?” The program itself does not ask them for their motivation or expectations. No school or employer required any of the participants to enroll. No certificates or continuing education units were requested or issued. There was no cost to participants and registration did not require a commitment to complete all five models, although it was hoped for. The individual’s choices to enroll and to continue to participate reflect an interest in the content, and an attitude and desire to learn. These factors affect how participants experience the dialogues and apply what they learn. As noted in the previous chapter, those interviewed admitted a personal interest in the content, a desire to interact with other participants and a desire to make a difference in the efforts to eliminate racism.

How do adults learn? From four years experience as an EFM (Education For Ministry) Mentor and twelve years as a facilitator of adult education programs in several Episcopal congregations, I have relied upon the following educational guidelines from the Kerygma Bible study program¹ (in quotes and underlined) in helping adults to learn.

- “Adults are responsible for their own learning”. The leader and facilitator’s roles in the dialogues are to allow learning to take place at the pace of the group and not act as the primary source of information. Therefore, it is important that the participants do not depend upon the leader of the dialogues for all their knowledge and insight.

Adults learn from each other. Sharing personal stories of discrimination in the Discrimination Lineup exercise (See Appendix p. 14) in the “Appreciating Diversity Model” was reported as one of the memorable experiences of the program.

- “Adults learn best when they can participate directly in the process of their own learning.” Therefore, the group exercises must allow the participants to make their own decisions about what they are learning and allow them to interact with the other participants. The first Ground Rule of the Dialogues is “Our primary commitment is to learn and understand from discussion facilitators, from each other, from materials and from our work.” The Definitions (See Appendix p. 6, 7) used in the dialogues are presented and discussed in small groups. Often the discussion includes efforts by some participants to refute the definitions, but accepting the Ground Rule that learning is a *process involving learning from others* supports this principle of adult education.
- “Adults represent a variety of learning styles.” Educators have shown that one’s *willingness to learn from others* and one’s *learning style* gradually change throughout life. Shifts in desire to learn reflect developmental trends in personality during adulthood, and learners prefer educational settings that fit their preferred learning style. “Adults tend to evolve from unquestioning conformity, to recognition of multiple viewpoints, to deliberate commitment, to application of universal principles and appreciation of relationships.”² Participants may be at any one of those places in their learning development. Therefore, the exercises need to offer a variety of learning experiences. E.g. individual reading and written responses, silent reflection,

small and large group discussions and exercises which require physical movement.

The setting and the format of the anti-racism dialogues were made known in advance through mailings (see Appendix p. 1, 2, 3), and thus, may have attracted those learners who prefer an interactive, experientially based learning experience in a religious setting. Those who are uncomfortable with such a setting or format may not be attracted to the program and may have withdrawn after the first and second model.

- “Adults in a group may be in a variety of stages of emotional and spiritual development.” Adult learners should be encouraged to learn at their own pace and to apply that new knowledge in ways that are appropriate to them. The Ground Rules of the Dialogue ask participants to respond in ways that “will not demean, devalue or trivialize any other person or group for their experience or perspectives.” Leaders and facilitators need to be aware of their *own* emotional and spiritual development as well as the variety of stages among the participants. Spacing the dialogues over a period of months allowed the participants time to integrate new information that may have been in conflict with information and experiences in their past.

Alan Knox in his book, Helping Adults Learn, describes the stages of emotional development in this way, “Like cognitive development, ego development continues into adulthood and some adults continue to evolve in their sense of self and approach to decision making. Early stages of ego development tend to be impulsive, self-protective, and conformist, characterized by dependence, opportunism, manipulation, belonging and stereotyping. Some adults never outgrow this stage of character development and so experience difficulty when dealing with learning activities that entail dealing with

complex patterns of ideas and making distinctions between process and outcomes. More advanced stages in the evolving sense of self entail increased awareness of one's own standards, appreciation of relationships, and concern for communication and collaboration to deal with problems, opportunities, motives, and achievement. Cognitive styles at these stages are characterized by multiple perspectives and complex patterns of ideas.”³ Several of those interviewed talked about coming to the dialogues interested in learning other people's perspectives and ready to work with others on something constructive and helpful to eliminate the problem of racism in our country.

- “Learning is reinforced best when adults have opportunities to practice new skills and express new ideas in their own words.” The exercises in the program allow participants to express personal insights about past experiences and encourage them to envision new personal experiences. Those who are apprehensive or fearful of offending others in discussions are often helped to feel accepted and included in the learning process by other participants. A black, middle aged woman said, “People didn't mind saying what was on their mind, and I said what was on my mind. Everyone learned from the exercises – no one got angry and left.”
- “Learning occurs within an environment of trusting relationships.” Therefore, it is important to develop a process in the dialogues whereby participants are encouraged to share their feelings, needs, concerns as well as new ideas and insights. Opening with prayer, sharing one's “Hopes and Fears” anonymously on index cards (See Appendix p. 10), discussing the Ground Rules and Guidelines (See Appendix p. 8, 9), having one's experiences validated, and having a meal together before or during the

day's program all contributed to building trusting relationships. Trust did not happen automatically; it grew over the 12 months of the dialogues. By the last dialogue participants all seemed to be on the same team.

- “Adults learn best in a cooperative, collaborative setting.” The exercises in the program encourage sharing ideas, decision-making in the next steps in the program, as well as having meals together. Participants are asked to discuss the exercises in small groups and the leader asks, “How are things going? Do you need more time?” “Choose someone from your group to report to the larger group.” The dialogues create what Kegan would describe as a “supportive holding environment” which is a psychosocial environment, which supports us and becomes a “value-mediating community”.⁴
- “Adults who have a positive self-concept are less threatened by new information and experiences.” One of the implied goals for the participants in the program is to enhance self-discovery and self-worth, which stimulate moral development, and motivates new behavior. Therefore, the program uses exercises that enhance everyone's sense of self-worth, an understanding of other people's experiences and the capacity to analyze social situations beyond their own. “A related aspect of personality is moral development. With age and experience, people expand moral judgments from a personal focus on their own needs and demands, from rules and people in authority to increasingly take other people into account: the group, the society, and finally all humanity.”⁵ The leader or small group facilitator needs to be skilled at guiding the participant's self-discovery, encouraging them to learn from

others and providing new information that stimulates them to search for meaning and application.

- “Adults increase their knowledge and skill to a greater extent when they gain a sense of satisfaction and experience success in the exercises planned for them.” The emphasis on self-directed learning enables the participants to gain mastery of the Definitions and Ground Rules used in the discussions and to gain confidence in their use outside the program. “The challenge is to help adults master an active process of praxis in which learners alternate between current proficiencies and a search for higher levels of understanding and mastery.”⁶ The exercise of “Personal Inventory” (sharing one’s personal experiences of race) (See Appendix p. 16) was cited by several participants as challenging and affirming. Helping participants to relate their past experiences to current learning contributed to their search for meaning and continued relationships with people whose experiences of race and racism are different than their own.
- “Transformational learning takes place when adults are placed in a situation that requires them to change their focus from self to other.”⁷ It needs to occur in a supportive holding environment that permits a process of gradually disembedding ourselves from ourselves, getting outside of ourselves, allowing us to see ourselves through other people’s eyes. Events that bring change, conflict, challenge, and new awareness of the increasing complexity of our world may trigger transformational learning. Some participants described the dialogues themselves as “change events” which helped them to grow. These “change events” motivate adaptation because the

event makes the *discrepancy* between current and desired proficiency sufficiently apparent that the individual is ready to do something about it. Some participants interviewed expressed a new awareness of racism *prior* to the dialogues, and wanted to participate in the dialogues to increase their proficiency. One white man talked about a “terrible” experience for him as a teacher which prompted him to learn more about himself. “I couldn’t help but change, (that event) made me aware of my unconscious racist attitudes and I knew I needed to learn more if I was going to be effective as a classroom teacher.”

- Language can be a vehicle to assist transformational learning.⁸ The dialogues create small communities of discourse that share a common language that helps participants to discover and express their personal and public assumptions. Small group discussions provide opportunities for participants to verbalize and examine their assumptions. The Definitions used in the dialogues are one of the tools given to assist participants in the learning process. Many of the participants interviewed said that the program had “spurred my interest and increased my desire to read more about racism.... I wish you’d had a table to books that you recommend to read on racism.” Once participants learned a new language they seemed eager to find ways to use it.
- Adults may be in a variety of stages of racial identity development.⁹ In addition to adult learning styles and adult developmental stages influencing the experience of adult participants, racial identity development is another influence on participation of which it is helpful for leaders and facilitators to be aware. Anti-racism educators have noted that a willingness to discuss race and racism changes throughout life. “Racial

identity development refers to the process of defining for oneself the personal significance and social meaning of belonging to a particular racial group.”¹⁰

Racial identity develops in the lives of white people and people of color, and can begin very early in childhood or not until adolescence. It may continue into adulthood, hopefully achieving a “healthy” self-image and racial identity. “Just as we don’t all reach puberty and begin developing sexual interest at the same time, racial identity development unfolds in idiosyncratic ways.”¹¹ Like other stages of emotional and spiritual development, the process of racial identity development is not so much linear as spiral. Moving through one stage doesn’t mean there won’t be new experiences that cause a person to revisit or return to an earlier stage.

How did we learn about race? In spite of Federal legislation against discrimination on the basis of race, there is still a great deal of separation of racial groups in our communities. Consequently, most of the information children and adults receive about race does not come from first hand experience. Knowledge of race comes second or third hand, shaped by the experiences of those in one’s family or community. Most of our assumptions about race are based on what we have been told or not told, and not on personal experience of the “other”. It is my understanding and working assumption that we learned about race in isolation from those ‘of a different race’, but we can relearn about race and racism in dialogue with each other.

How would you describe yourself? All people are commonly described on the basis of their physical appearance, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, socio-

economic level, age, and physical or mental ability. I first learned to describe myself as a “petite athletic girl” because that is what I was told. “Identity formation employs a process of simultaneous reflection and observation, a process taking place at all levels of mental functioning.”¹² For most of our lives *we think we are who other people tell us we are*. We internalize the images of ourselves that are reflected back to us by others, for good or for ill. As a European American, my white racial identity is taken for granted by the dominant white European culture through which I freely and easily move. As a young girl I never heard myself described as “white”. “In the absence of *dissonance* this dimension of identity escapes conscious attention.”¹³ “Whiteness as a norm has been so completely built into our thinking patterns that we notice it as little as a fish sees water.”¹⁴ “Whiteness, as a set of normative cultural practices, is visible most clearly to those it definitively excludes and those to whom it does violence. Those who are securely housed within its borders usually do not examine it.”¹⁵ Like many “white” people, I was unconscious of my white racial or Irish identity until I felt excluded (because I was a “mick”) from people and situations of which I desired to be a part. I began to realize that *I was suffering* for the racism in the society.

As an example, the “Irish” did not recognize their Irish identity until they came to America. In Ireland they identified themselves by their county and their parish. Like the African slaves imported to America from many different African tribes and nations, when immigrants from Ireland (which was divided by politics) arrived in America they were discriminated against and identified by others as “Irish”. It was only in America that the “Irish” rediscovered the sense of community they had lost during the famine in their

homeland. Descendants of African slaves began to identify themselves as Afro-American in the 1960's in an effort to form community and identity during the Civil Rights Movement.

Most residents of suburban communities are “white” and in the case of Weston, the school children who are seen as “black” are those children bussed into Weston from Boston. Consequently, black children in Weston are seen as “other” because of their skin color and because they do not live in the community. So even though the children are having a first hand experience with children whose skin color is different from theirs, they tend to link the two distinctions. As one white child told me, “The black kids live far away”. Thus begins the first lesson in racism. One of the Ground Rules in the dialogues is “We acknowledge that one of the consequences of racism is the systemic misinformation we have been taught about all groups of people. (This is true for both dominant and dominated groups members.)” The societal structures in our culture are keeping many of God's children away from each other. Only when residential neighborhoods become ethnically and racially diverse will children have naturally occurring and affirming first-hand experiences of ‘race’.

My hope is that a desire to be in dialogue with persons of color will occur when a ‘white’ person begins to feel isolated from persons of color and discovers that his or her knowledge of him or herself is incomplete. Persons of color have already experienced isolation from white people in their workplaces, schools and neighborhoods. Hopefully when white people begin to feel the isolation and the subsequent loss, they will seek opportunities for dialogue and personal growth. “We have to believe that by engaging in

dialogue with the other person, we have the possibility of making a change within ourselves, that we can become deeper. Dialogue is not a means for assimilation in the sense that one side expands and incorporates the other into its “self”. We have to allow what is good, beautiful, and meaningful in the other’s tradition to transform us.”¹⁶ White people need to initiate the dialogue with persons of color first, in order to learn about themselves and second, how they have been negatively affected by racism, and then how they can work together to eliminate racism.

Theories of Racial Identity Development

Several theories of Racial Identity Development have been proposed. There are “eleven developmental models for African-Americans alone” according to Rowe, Bennett and Atkinson, who claim that “all are an elaboration or refinement of W.E. Cross’ model first proposed and published in 1971.”¹⁷ Racial identity development is not an explicit goal of the dialogues, and the exercises are designed to meet participants at any stage of their racial identity development. Yet it would be helpful if the leader and facilitators were conscious of their *own* racial identity development in order to be sensitive to the participants’ responses and reactions in the discussions and exercises.

Although the number of stages and specifics of each stage vary across the models, according to Beverly Tatum there are basically five stages of **Black Racial Identity Development**:

1. **Pre-encounter** – Involves acceptance of the stereotypes that the dominant society has attributed to the group. At this stage a black person absorbs many of the beliefs and values of the dominant white culture, and concludes that it is better to be white. Black

adults whose lifestyle or work involves frequent contact with “whites” become aware that their ability to ‘make it’ depends in large part on their ability and willingness to conform to those values and behaviors that have been apparently legitimized by the dominant white culture.¹⁸ Emotional reactions to racist treatment and comments are unconsciously suppressed. Some black adults choose to live a “raceless” persona, adopting a pre-encounter stance as a way to win approval of white friends and co-workers.¹⁹ None of the black participants demonstrated a pre-encounter attitude, but all recalled childhood experiences of pre-encounter. It seems unlikely that a person of color adopting a pre-encounter stance would participate in an anti-racism dialogue since a black person who participates will be expected to speak from his or her “black” experience and perspective.

2. **Encounter with racism** – The stage is precipitated by a series of events that force a person to acknowledge the personal impact of racism, and realization that many white people do not view black people as equal to them. This can occur in childhood, and is repeated into adulthood. A black woman shared an experience of her childhood of being invited to a birthday party by a white classmate in her elementary school. When she arrived at the door, the classmate’s mother was rude and appeared unpleasantly surprised by her son’s race. This change in self-understanding when a black person first experiences discrimination and dissonance (a difference between self-image and projected image) may lead to efforts to resist the stereotypic expectations of black people. Encounters with racism unfortunately may continue into adulthood, as long as a system of advantage based on race continues to exist.

3. **Immersion/emersion** – The stage is “characterized by the simultaneous desire to surround oneself with visible signs of one’s racial identity, and an active avoidance of symbols of whiteness.” Young blacks adolescents soon realize that being “black” is the thing that others are going to see first, no matter how much they try to de-emphasize their “blackness”.²⁰ W.E.B. DuBois, who received his M.A. and Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1895, wrote The Souls of Black Folk in 1898. In that book he described this awareness as the “gift of double consciousness”.

“After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, - a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others... One ever feels his two-ness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.”²¹

The object of one’s concern at this stage is both being black in a black community and being invisible in the white culture. Since adolescents tend to find their emotional identity within their peer group, resisting racial discrimination and affirming other definitions of themselves becomes the work of black adolescents attending schools in both predominantly white or black communities.²² Black adolescents begin to reject relationships with white adolescents and choose to sit together in the cafeteria. “It is the peer group, the kids in the cafeteria, who hold the answers to the questions. They know *how to be Black*... and (the black peer group) protects one’s identity from the psychological assault of racism, and keeps the dominant (white) group at a distance.”²³

Adults in the immersion/emersion stage are likely to be race-conscious about their children's socialization experiences by choosing to live in a black community. If demographics do not permit such a choice, they seek out black playmates for their children, attend a black church, and will spend as much time as possible with other black people. None of the participants interviewed demonstrated an immersion/emersion stance, but a few talked about their youth in the 1960's when they had worn "Afro" hairstyles and all their friends were "Afro-American".

4. **Internalization** – A person of color develops security about his or her racial identity, and accepts positive attributes of people outside his/her racial group. Persons at this stage often discover that there is more than one way to be black. One of the black men interviewed said, "I watched *The Color of Fear* (film) prior to participating. I couldn't identify with the angry man in the film. I was raised in a black church and it affected how I responded to hurtful experiences." He talked about how much anger he hears among some of his friends, but that "isn't *my way*". He proudly talked about his Christian parents and home that taught him about loving your neighbor and forgiveness. Tatum reported that the 1991 National Black Survey indicated the positive role that the churches had played in both community development and psychological and social support.²⁴

One of the insights from adult developmental theory is that at a later point in adult development we realize "we are not made up by our experiences". We recognize what we were taught and we can make choices about it, modify it and change it. A black man said in the interview, "I came (to the dialogue) because I wanted to learn for myself something

about white people. I was curious what motivated them to come, what questions they would have about race and racism.” As a black person begins to think his or her *own* thoughts and learn for his or herself, he or she becomes more self-authoring and enters into the Commitment stage.

5. **Commitment** – A person of color develops concern for people of color as a group.

“Those at the fifth stage have found ways to translate their personal sense of blackness into a plan of action or a general sense of commitment”²⁵ to the concern for Blacks as a group and to transcend ‘race’. One of the black participants said, “I came because maybe I could share my experience, perhaps teach something to a white or black person, and exchange, communicate with each other.” At the conclusion of the fifth model, white and black participants talked and worked together as a team to develop a plan to eliminate racism in their community. They expressed concern for the level funding of the METCO program and reduction of the number of black children attending Weston and Wayland Schools.

Recently a number of **White Racial Identity Development Models** have been proposed based on Helms 1994 model. Helms proposed that Racial Identity Development is an aspect of Personality Development since it “depends on a combination of life experiences, esp. intrapsychic dissonance and race-related environmental pressures, as well as cognitive readiness.”²⁶ “Whites’ racial identity is a psychological orientation towards their racial group membership.”²⁷ White people tend to think of racial identity as something that people of color have to learn to accept, and that racial identity is not

relevant to their lives of white people. Similar to the development of Black Racial Identity, white participants in anti-racism education may be in different stages of their White racial identity development. Beverly Tatum has expanded Helms 5-stage model and proposes that there are 6 stages in **White Racial Identity Development**:

1. **Contact** – Living in the United States where the majority of people are “white”, a white person learns that being “white” is the majority, the norm, and he/she actively or passively absorbs the message that black is “other” and not the cultural norm. Most white people are unaware of the unearned privileges they have just by being ‘white’ and there is little recognition that ‘being white’ has any personal *racial* significance. Tatum describes this stage as when white individuals “perceive themselves as color-blind, completely free of prejudice, unaware of their own assumptions about other racial groups.”²⁸ Being “color-blind” is when an individual first recognizes a person’s color and then claims to ignore it, wanting it not to be important in the relationship. White people at this stage may actually have only brief situational relationships with people of color. E.g. employees in the home, interaction in stores or restaurants, etc. Robert Carter describes this stage as, “When a white person has an immature, externally defined and personally unexamined aspect of their identity, yet benefits from institutional and cultural racism.”²⁹ But then *something happens*, and the process of racial identity development for “whites” begins to unfold. White participants may come to the first dialogue in the Contact stage, proudly color-blind, and unaware of the concept of “White Privilege”.

2. **Disintegration** – This stage emerges when a white person experiences conflict in their family, workplace or community and becomes aware of either his or her own racist attitudes and behaviors or those of their friends, co-workers or community. “The individual learns that race does matter, that racism does exist, and that they are White.”³⁰ Disintegration comes when a white person realizes he or she is not an individual, but can be seen as belonging to a group. One white woman interviewed talked about moving to Hawaii after college, and discovering that as a white person she was in the minority. “I grew up in an Irish Catholic neighborhood in the North End, which was very isolating...Working in Hawaii cracked open my cosmic egg. There were so many different looking kinds of people and languages.” I can recall my own Junior High experience of being shunned by a group of black girls in my gym class because I would “played basketball like a *white* girl.” I resented being seen as a stereotype; I hadn’t seen myself as a member of a group. As Tatum describes it, “For Whites, thinking of oneself only as an individual is a legacy of White privilege.”³¹

The Peggy McIntosh exercise of “Understanding Privilege” was the most frequently mentioned significant moment for the white participants interviewed. (See Appendix p. 11, 12, 13) One white man described the “Understanding Privilege” exercise as “a great leap forward for me as a white male. I didn’t realize that I was holding all the cards”. “At the disintegration stage, white individuals begin to see how much of their lives and the lives of people of color had been affected by racism in our society.”³² “Awareness of racism often results in discomfort and guilt, denying the validity of the information, psychologically or physically withdrawing from it.”³³ This may explain why the greatest

decrease in the number of participants occurred after the second model. Were they uncomfortable or angry about the new information they received? I was unable to interview those who withdrew to discover their reasons.

The Understanding Privilege exercise and the Definitions used became sources of intense discussion at the tables and may have moved some white participants into the stage of Disintegration. One white man talked about how hard it was to talk about these things with a black man. “I was not connecting with that gentleman very well in the groups, he seemed to be coming from a different place than I was, and I desperately wanted to know what was on his mind. I was *afraid* after we did the White Privilege exercise. I hadn’t really *earned* what I had. And fear is a great motivator to change.” “Understanding racism as a system of advantage that structurally benefits Whites and disadvantages people of color ...threatens not only beliefs about society but also beliefs about one’s own life accomplishments.”³⁴ The societal inequities they now notice directly contradict the ideal of the American meritocracy and their religious understanding that we are all created equals by God. “Like new converts, people experiencing disintegration can be quite zealous in their efforts.”³⁵ One white woman described her desire to create a web-site with information for people who “had slaves in the family and want to learn how they can redeem their family’s sins.” This discomfort or anxiety may lead to a desire to relieve it by moving to either the Reintegration stage or Pseudo-independence stage.

3. **Reintegration** – “At this stage the previous feelings of guilt and denial may be transformed into anger and fear directed toward people of color.”³⁶ “Reintegration rests on the conscious or subconscious belief that Whites are better than people of

color....People who hold these views may just stay far away from Blacks and people of color, or such a person may even work with people of color, ...yet with the belief that people of color should learn to adopt White American or European ways of being and lifestyles.”³⁷ This attitude relieves the white person of taking any responsibility for making changes in his or her life or advocating systemic social change. An example of extreme behavior based on a Reintegration attitude would be “white supremacists” that advocate “separation of the races”. But a deepening awareness of racism may also lead to a commitment to unlearn one’s racism and marks the emergence of the Pseudo-Independent stage.

None of the white persons interviewed expressed anger at people of color or a desire to retreat from them. But when the program was proposed to the local clergy association, a elderly white man expressed a Reintegration attitude, “Oh, are we inviting blacks to come to this so we can teach them what they need to learn about being black?” When the intention of the program was explained again, he said he understood, but did not attend the program. Persons holding this position are unlikely to choose to participate in the dialogues. “It may take some powerful event either with Blacks or Whites for a person to question and begin to abandon this type of racial identity.”³⁸

4. **Pseudo-independent** – “Sometimes epitomized by the ‘guilty White liberal’ persona, the pseudo-independent individual has an intellectual understanding of racism as a system of advantage, but doesn’t quite know what to do about it.”³⁹ Self-conscious and guilty, a pseudo-independent white person wants to accept “black people” as a group, but when associating with blacks he or she behaves differently than with

whites in an attempt to show they “understand the black experience”. *Self* - examination of their racial attitudes and how to respond authentically and emotionally in interracial social situations are still missing. “White people operating from this racial identity ego status maintain and promulgate their own values, derived from a White cultural framework.”⁴⁰ White persons in this stage focus on what can be done *for* people of color. Their own *white* racial identity is still underdeveloped.

5. **Immersion/emersion** – Carter describes this stage as when, “Emotional and intellectual integration begins to take place and one begins to understand that victims of oppression cannot stop their victimization.” A white individual begins to uncover the origins of their own racist attitudes and behaviors, and brings the emotional level into the process. “The feelings of guilt and shame start to fade. ...a need emerges to work through the feelings of guilt and shame with honesty and candor in a group of white people who are anti-racist.”⁴¹ “(White individuals) no longer look to the victim for solutions to their oppression. Instead they turn to other whites to help them challenge racism.”⁴² One of the outcomes of the dialogue is that white people begin to realize that they need white allies to support one another in speaking up against systems of oppression and to challenge other whites to do the same. One white woman interviewed, who describes herself as “white”, expressed an immersion/emersion attitude in her frustration at not being able to discuss what she’d learned in the dialogues with all her friends. “I couldn’t share my experience because we weren’t on an even plane – I couldn’t go into much depth in a discussion on racism – their reaction says a lot - it’s an *identity* thing. They wonder *why* you think

that way about black people or *what* you did the dialogue for? I'm in a different place now than they are. I get it that *I'm white*."

6. **Autonomy** – This stage emerges "when a white person fully incorporates "whiteness" into their identity...while autonomy might be described as racial self-actualization, racial identity development never really ends. The person at this level is continually open to new information and new ways of thinking about racial and cultural variables."⁴³ "Autonomy is a racial identity status in which the person has freed self from racism and White racial denial. At this level of racial identity, one has evolved a complex and differentiated understanding of Whiteness and racism."⁴⁴ I am not sure that any of the white participants, including myself, could honestly claim to be living at this stage. If we did, we would probably be living in a racist-free society. I doubt that one white person alone can claim to have freed his or herself from racism.

There has been criticism of White Identity Development theory because according to Wayne Rowe, et al., the stages could "describe groupings of whites who share common *attitudes*, not *stages* of (white) identity development, and might be more descriptively labeled White Racial Consciousness."⁴⁵ "There is nothing in nature similar to the Piagetian stages of mental operations that orders the stages of white identity development and nothing other than our imposed ethics that imbues the stages with ordered levels of desirability."⁴⁶ Rowe indicates that there is no evidence that shows that the process of

changing one's racial self-understanding is a *developmental* sequence. This raises the question of the strategy and goals of the anti-racism dialogues.

The purpose of the "National Dialogues on Anti-Racism" is to elicit a common ground of understanding of the way that race and racism functions in our society, and the exercises are intended to be experiential and not didactic. They begin by helping participants to deconstruct, unlearn early experiences of racism and then to analyze their behavior. The exercises are designed to motivate changes in racial attitude and behavior of *all* participants, regardless of race or color, based on religious mandates.

Although the dialogues do not explicitly include exercises or discussion of racial identity development, a by-product of the dialogues may be the participants' own reexamination of their racial identity formation. One of the early exercises "Personal Inventory" (See Appendix p. 16) asks participants to recall, "When were you first aware that there is such a thing as race and ethnic difference?" And, "What are your earliest memories of people of color being treated differently than whites?" And, "Name a time when you stood up for your rights or the rights of others." The questions have the potential of moving a participant from one stage of racial identity consciousness to another. However, none of the black participants interviewed described any new insight into their own racial identity learned from the dialogues, perhaps because they were all at the same point in their black racial identity development (Commitment).

Rowe et al. also propose that "racial attitudes change following, and as a result of, experiences that cause dissonance in the person's cognitive structures or schemas. The particular way that people resolve experiential dissonance is considered to be a function

of their current or previous learning history.”⁴⁷ The exercises in the program create cognitive dissonance, which may help to change both racial attitudes toward others and racial identity consciousness of the participants. **This study provides evidence that the dialogue exercises do motivate attitudinal change in white participants and inspire collaborative efforts (white and people of color) to eliminate racism in whatever sphere of influence the group may have.**

The goal of the dialogues is the development of an action plan, because effective consciousness-raising about racism must also point the way toward constructive action. After doing a social analysis, participants are asked to reflect on an acceptable loss for them. When asked, “what would this town, this church, look like if racism were eliminated?” one white man painfully responded, “Weston wouldn’t be Weston. My hometown wouldn’t be like home anymore.” The task for each of us, white or of color, is to identify our sphere of influence (however large or small) and to consider how it might be used to dismantle the systemic structures and interrupt the cycle of misinformation on racism.

The information gathered from this study indicates that participants need a support/action group to help them identify their sphere of influence and what they can do, and to remind them of what they have done and what they have left undone. For when any group of people doesn’t have the tools and the support to move forward they tend to return to what is familiar. This may be especially true for white participants who will return to their “dominant white unearned privileged” culture and be tempted to “slip back into previous behaviors”. One of the Ground Rules of the Dialogues is “We will be held

responsible for repeating misinformation after we have heard and learned otherwise.” A support/action group helps them to be responsible for what they have learned, so that they do not remain silent about racism. As the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “We shall have to repent in this generation, not so much for the evil deeds of the wicked people, but for the appalling silence of the good people.”

¹ Kerygma program, Pittsburgh, PA 1989, p. xi (Preparing to Lead)

² Knox, Alan B., Helping Adults Learn, p. 22

³ Ibid., p. 24

⁴ Kegan, Robert, The Evolving Self, Harvard University Press, 1982, p. 116

⁵ Ibid., p. 26

⁶ Ibid., p. 25

⁷ Kegan, Robert, Dr. said in a lecture on March 4, 1999, on “*Psychological Transformation*”, at Harvard Graduate School of Education, course “Adult Development T-006”

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Tatum, Beverly, “Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?”, Basic Books –Perseus Books Group, NY, 1997, p. 83

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 16

¹¹ Ibid., p. 67

¹² Knox, p. 19, referring to Eric Ericson’s work

¹³ Ibid., p.21

¹⁴ Davies, Susan E., “Combating Racism in Church and Seminary”, Ending Racism in the Church, p. 33

¹⁵ Hess, Mary E., “White Religious Educators and Unlearning Racism: Can We Find a Way?”, Religious Education, Vol. 93, No.1, Winter 1998

¹⁶ Thich Nhat Hanh, Living Buddha, Living Christ, Riverhead Books, NY, 1995, p. 9

¹⁷ Rowe, et al., “White Racial Identity Models”, Counseling Psychologist, Vol. 22, No.1, Jan. 1994, p. 129

¹⁸ Tatum, p. 84

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 64

²¹ DuBois, W.E.B., The Souls of Black Folk, Penguin Books, NY, NY, (1903), 1996, p. 5

²² Tatum, p. 57

²³ Ibid., p. 60

²⁴ Ibid., p. 83

²⁵ Tatum, “Talking about Race, Learning about Racial Identity Development Theory in the Classroom”, Harvard Educational Review, vol. 62, No.1, Spring 1992, p. 12

²⁶ Helms, J.E. and Piper, R.E., “Implications of Racial Identity theory for vocational psychology”, Journal of Vocational Behavior, vol. 44, 1994, p. 126

²⁷ Carter, R.T, Off-White – readings on Race, Power and Society, “Is White a Race?”, Routledge, NY, p. 199

²⁸ Tatum, “Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria”, p. 95

²⁹ Carter, p. 201

³⁰ Ibid., p. 202

³¹ Tatum, “Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria”, p. 102

³² Ibid., p. 98

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 103

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- ³⁵ Ibid., p. 99
³⁶ Ibid., p. 101
³⁷ Carter, p. 203
³⁸ Ibid., p. 204
³⁹ Tatum, "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria", p. 106
⁴⁰ Carter, p. 204
⁴¹ Tatum, p. 111
⁴² Carter, p. 205
⁴³ Tatum, p. 112
⁴⁴ Carter, p. 206
⁴⁵ Rowe et al, "White Racial Identity Models", *The Counseling Psychologist*, Vol. 22 No.1, Jan. 94, p. 133
⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 132
⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 135

“There is a movement, not easily discernible, at the heart of things to reverse the awful centrifugal force of alienation, brokenness, division, hostility, and disharmony. God has set in motion a centripetal process, a moving toward the center, toward unity, harmony, goodness, peace and justice, a process that removes barriers. Jesus says, “And when I am lifted up from the earth I shall draw everyone to myself” as he hangs from his cross with outflung arms, thrown out to clasp all, everyone and everything, in a cosmic embrace, so that all, everyone, everything, belongs. None is an outsider, all are insiders, all belong. **There are no aliens**, all belong in the one family, God’s family, the human family. There is no longer Jew or Greek, male or female, slave or free – instead of separation and division, all distinctions make for a rich diversity to be celebrated for the sake of the unity that underlies them. We are different so that we can know our need of one another, for no one is ultimately self-sufficient. The self-sufficient person would be sub-human.”

- The Rt. Rev. Desmond Tutu, Chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,
No Future Without Forgiveness, Doubleday, New York, 1999, p. 265

Chapter Four -

Why Suburban Christians Should Develop a *Koinonia* of Diversity

Liberation theologians have argued persuasively that all good theology is situated. It is called forth by the needs of a particular community of faith; it is not simply done in a vacuum, as a kind of academic exercise.¹ This chapter is a biblical and theological reflection on my ministerial experience of coordinating the Anti-Racism Dialogues. The program challenged me to consider how suburban congregations are being called to develop a renewed understanding of “*koinonia*”, a fellowship that includes “saints from every tribe, and language, and people and nation.” (Rev.5: 9) I had felt called by God to provide anti-racism education for the congregation and the community which I serve because I saw the discrepancy between the Christian message of *koinonia* and the racial and cultural homogeneity of the congregation. I knew that if I did not help the congregation become aware of the racist assumptions and privileges under which it functions it would unwittingly be participating in the sin of racism. Joyfully, forty people from seven different suburban congregations responded to the invitation and participated in the Anti-Racism Dialogues. Was their participation merely “an academic exercise”, or would they bring their anti-racism training and experience of the new *koinonia* to their particular congregations? How would I bring my experience in the Anti-Racism Dialogues and the vision of the action group to the congregation that I serve?

As I reported in the Introduction, thirty years ago Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “Eleven o’clock Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in America”. Since then demographic shifts have brought increasing racial and ethnic diversity to many suburban

towns, including the town in which the congregation I serve is situated. But the racial and ethnic composition of this suburban congregation has not changed. Why should a predominantly white Episcopal congregation welcome non-European families into its fellowship when its founding identity is Anglican in heritage, English in language and democratic in polity? Why should a suburban Christian congregation develop a “*koinonia of diversity*”?

The Church has a long history of models of *koinonia*, models that have served local communities of faith in *their* time. The American culture has also had a variety of models of community. As one of my seminary professors once said, “The 20th century American nationalistic “melting pot” model (blending together of racial and ethnic groups) was a ‘crock’.” The 21st century model of pluralism is thought to be like a “salad bowl” where all the separate ingredients are freshly tossed together so that each flavor may be tasted and appreciated in combination. As we enter the 21st century we seem to be experiencing a “new watershed, a new cultural and theological paradigm which is shattering the monolithic character and hegemony of the Western Church as a whole, which has been predominantly Euro-American, white, male and bourgeois.”²

Koinonia is the Greek word used in the LXX translation of the Hebrew scriptures and Greek New Testament for “participation”, “sharing” or “fellowship”. The understanding of who was permitted to participate and share in the fellowship of the community of faith evolved as the identity of the people of God developed. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the biblical models of “*koinonia*” and use them as a plumb line to see how true to its calling to be the new *koinonia* in Christ a predominantly white

suburban church has been, welcoming and incorporating all people in its membership. In order to recapture the vision of inclusivity intended in the mission of the Church, we must critically examine *koinonia* as found in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Koinonia as used in Hebrew scripture:

The group of words (*koinos*, *koinonos*, *koinonia*) for “common”, “participant”, and “fellowship” is rarely used in the Hebrew scriptures. In the Hebrew scriptures *koinos* was originally used in the sense of common ownership, property, what concerns all. *Koinonia* is found in Sirach (6:10) for table fellowship. Fellowship with God is not a Hebraic concept. However, fellowship was prescribed for human relationships. Initially, those who were not God’s fellows were considered strangers (*xenos* = LXX Gk. equivalent for foreigner, stranger, guest). The ancient Hebrew people were commanded by God to offer hospitality (*philoxenia* = LXX Gk. equivalent) to *xenos*. Hospitality could overcome tension, increase commerce and was a peaceful way to deal with strangers. Neighbor (*plesion*) was limited to those who worship the one God and stand under his command (Leviticus 19:18). Kindness (*philanthropia*) to foreign visitors was demanded in the Hebrew culture. They were to be protected, especially if poor (Lev. 25:35). “You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien (*paroikos*), for you were once aliens in the land of Egypt.” (Ex. 22:22) The Hebrew people were to remember their own experience of being an alien and sympathize with traveling aliens. Ancient Israel accepted resident aliens (*paroikos*) in their land, yet excluded them from cultic participation.

During the period of the monarchy, the Kings demanded openness to foreigners, but the prophets preached against foreign influences. Solomon stood before the assembly of Israel and said, “When a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a distant land because of your name...when a foreigner comes and prays toward this house, then hear in heaven your dwelling place, and do according to all that the foreigner calls to you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you.” (1 Kings 8:41) It was for God’s sake that hospitality (*philoxenia*) was offered to foreigners in order to bring them to faith in the God of Israel. The prophet Ezekiel proposed that resident aliens could eventually be integrated into the people. “In whatever tribe aliens reside, there you shall assign them their inheritance, says the Lord God.” (Ezekiel 47:22-23)

After the exile the attitude toward strangers and aliens hardened. The prophets discouraged any commandment or desire to include strangers, aliens (*allotrios* = LXX Gk. equivalent for unsuitable, hostile alien) in the worshipping community. Grateful for the remnant of Israel that God had allowed to return to their homeland to rebuild the Temple, Ezra the priest stood up and said to the assembly, “You must separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from foreign wives.” (Ezra 10:10) This contributed to the Jewish opposition to *koinonia* with Samaritans and other mixed peoples. The people of Israel then became intensely concerned with purity of race, culture and religious practice, and excluded gentiles or non-Jews from their community. Neighborly love was required only among members of the Jewish community, and hostility toward “others” increased except for the sake of peace. The law of hospitality that once extended to non-

Israelites now applied only to Israelites and resident aliens (*paroikos*). *Koinonia* was demanded and expected only among Jewish people.

Koinonia as used in Christian scripture:

The Christian understanding of *koinonia* originality demanded inclusion of all people, regardless of tribe, race, class or nationality because all were recognized as people of God. It was a kerygmatic community, not a biological, tribal, cultic, hierarchical or exclusive association. The new community of the risen Christ was drawn from all nations to form not a new nation, but a universal community transcending all provincial understandings of divine presence. It was a world transforming praxis.³

Jesus' ministry called for a "new and radical family" based not on blood relationship, but on the human-divine ethical relationship. "And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." (Mark 3:33-35) The deciding factor in the new *koinonia* is one's relation to others through ethical obedience to God and a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Jesus was a friend of those who were considered "other" by the Jewish tradition of his time: non-Jews, those considered ritually unclean (the sick, sinful). Jesus offered the 'unlovable' the friendship of God by eating and drinking with prostitutes and tax collectors, touching and speaking to the sick, women, non-Jews, and disregarding the laws of religious purity. He was accused of being their *friend*. His table fellowship was a sign that the Kingdom of God had come near. As a stranger himself, Jesus depended on

the hospitality of others, and he demonstrated God's hospitality as an essential ethic of the new *koinonia*.

Jesus taught that when judgment comes, all the nations will gather before the throne of God, and they will be sorted out by how they treated the least of the members of God's family. "Come, you that are blessed, inherit the kingdom....For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me." (Matthew 25:35) Strangers and non-Jews are welcome, and the poor and the hungry are welcome. How we treat those who are considered "other" by our culture will be the criteria under which God will judge us.

The first Christian communities gathered around the living presence of the risen Christ. "God is faithful, by whom you were called into fellowship (*koinonia*) of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Cor. 1:9) They were instructed to welcome strangers because the risen Christ is loved when we love the stranger. "Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the friends, even though they are strangers to you....for they began their journey for the sake of Christ, accepting no support from non-believers." (3 John 5,7) A model of Christian *koinonia* was also given in the Letter to the Hebrews 13:2 when reference was made to how Abraham provided hospitality to three strangers, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it."

The disciples' experience of Pentecost, the gift of the Holy Spirit, which empowered them to go out into the world and communicate the gospel in many languages, revealed that all languages and nations are necessary for the adequate praise of

God. (Acts 2:1-11) In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus' last words to his disciples in the Great Commission reflected his desire that their *koinonia* be extended to all nations and people. "Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19) Christian *koinonia* is intended to include every language, people, and nation. "None is an outsider, all are insiders, all belong. There are no aliens, all belong in one family, God's family, the human family."⁴

St. Paul further developed the understanding of the new *koinonia* in Christ as the new "people of God" (*laos theou*), the Body of Christ, and the household of God (*oikos*). These became the earliest and most inclusive images used by the early Christian community, which comprised all believers, both Jewish and Gentile-Christians. The *laos theou* marked Christianity's continuity with Israel. Israel believed it was the people of God in two senses: as a gathering for community purposes (Gk. *ekklesia*) and as a nation in the political and ethnic sense. The Christian use of the *laos theou* indicated that the early Christian community saw itself as the new Israel, a new people of God. (Gal. 6:16) The spiritual *laos* replaced the biological *laos* of God. "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:28) It was a people without boundaries, or a common language or a single ethnic identity. According to St. Paul, the *laos theou* that once applied to the ancient Hebrew people now applied to the early Church. "As indeed he says in Hosea, "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people'... and in the very place where it

was said to them, ‘You are not my people’, **there** they shall be called children of the living God.” (Romans 9:25a, 26)

The Body of Christ became the second image that further defined the new *koinonia* in Christ. “The bread that we break, is it not a sharing (*koinonia*) in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.” (1 Cor. 10:16-17) The church becomes the Body of Christ by following Jesus’ example of sharing a common meal with the powerless and those in positions of power in order to “*do this* in remembrance of me.” (Luke 22:19)

St. Paul’s use of the household of God (*oikos*) in Ephesians was the third and most inclusive image for the early Christian community which welcomed strangers from all nations to join in the fellowship of those who believe in Jesus Christ. “So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, ...were at that time without Christ, being *aliens* from the commonwealth of Israel, and *strangers* to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ....So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God (*oikos*), built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.” (Eph.2:11a,12-13,19-20) For Paul the household of God was the eschatological vision of the Temple, in which all may worship and all are equal, based on their faith in Christ. The earliest model of the Church was an inclusive community, a *koinonia of diversity*.

Koinonia as found in the Church's tradition:

In the Episcopal Church we conclude the sacrament of Baptism with the words of welcome: "We receive you into the *household of God*. Confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and *share with us* in his eternal priesthood." (Book of Common Prayer, p. 308) What we share (*koinonia*) is Christ's priestly ministry of reconciliation, one with another and with God. The Episcopal Church defines the mission of the Church as "to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ". (BCP p. 855) The Church acknowledges that though reconciled with God through Christ, we are not fully reconciled with one another. "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation." (2 Cor. 5:18) Oneness and reconciliation of all humanity is God's mission and the Church expects itself to be a place and a catalyst for the unity of all people.

Jesus' concern that *koinonia* as a fellowship of love and unity of faith would continue after his departure was reflected in his command on the night before he died for us. "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." (John 13:34) And scripture records Jesus praying, "Father,... the glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one." (John 17:22) The source of our love for one another is the love that Jesus has for us. The source of our unity with each other is the unity that Jesus has with God and the one faith we share in Jesus as the Christ.

Without Christ, there is no Church. Ecclesiology can only be developed from Christology. Every statement about the Church should be a reflection on Christ. The statements about the church - the "body of Christ", "the household of God", "God's

people”, “the communion of saints”, etc. - are directed towards the person of Jesus and his history, by way of the Christological titles on which they depend.⁵ It is only where Christ alone rules, and the Church listens to his voice only, that the Church arrives at its truth and becomes a liberating power in the world. And every statement about Christ also implies a statement about the Church.⁶ The *koinonia* of the Church must reflect the inclusive, reconciling message of Christ.

Yet the image of Christ and the image of the Church always reflect the ‘spirit of the age’, the political and economic circumstances, and the cultural and social conditions in which the churches are ministering. The history of the Kingdom of God on earth is nothing other than the history of the reuniting of what is separated and the freeing of what is broken.⁷ “The Church participates in the uniting of men with one another, in the uniting of society with nature and in the uniting of creation with God. Wherever unions like this take place, however fragmentary and fragile they may be, there is the Church. The true church is the fellowship of love.”⁸ Worship is the place and way that we connect our understanding of Christ and our ministry of reconciliation with the context in which we live and serve. Worship is where a *koinonia* of diversity must begin.

Koinonia as expressed in the 21st century suburban church

The suburban church has been pulled away from the vertical plumb line of *koinonia* given to us by Jesus Christ, St. Paul or in the Church’s own tradition by the racist, classist, ableist, and sexist culture in which we live and which we must transform. Persons of color, those of an apparently different socioeconomic level, and the physically challenged are frequently treated like strangers or resident aliens – protected if poor,

offered hospitality out of courtesy, but inclusion in membership programs is limited to those who can assimilate. Greeting newcomers in order to bring them to faith in Christ is rarely the intention of Episcopalians in New England. Baptism becomes the outward and visible sign of being “receive (d) into the household of God”. But those who are non-white and already baptized have difficulty becoming part of the household of God, if it is predominantly white. The local congregation’s understanding of the Body of Christ appears to pertain exclusively to its own membership. Rarely does the pain of one congregation affect the life of another or the pain of a newcomer affect the congregation. “If redemption is to occur in human life, the Pauline eschatological vision must become a historical vision. If we do not insist on this, it becomes easy, all too easy, for the church itself to slip back into the conventional human patterns of provincialism, patriarchy, exclusion and exploitation.”⁹

Every human community corresponds to its environment and reflects it. Residential communities are formed around employment and educational opportunities, particular socioeconomic levels, and racial and ethnic associations. The local suburban church is no exception. “The suburb is a place of privilege, a dream of upward mobility, a clean place where children can be safely raised among home-owning neighbors and friends of similar status and class. It has no factories and no working class or service-class people, and it is often racially segregated *de facto*. It took education to arrive there, and education is also one of its greatest concerns and products....Their religious education programs have done a good job of transmitting peer culture, which tends to

identify religion solely with the beliefs of “people like us” rather than with the whole common people of God.”¹⁰

Consequently, most suburban churches have limited their sphere of concern to their local community and its membership (Inreach/Pastoral Care) and to the municipalities surrounding it (Outreach). They have too often listened to the voice of culture and their local community, and not Jesus Christ. For rarely does a local suburban congregation directly engage with those beyond a convenient distance from the church. Rarely does a local suburban congregation recognize its sphere of influence to include the oppressive systems in which the church silently and invisibly participates. Rarely does a predominantly white suburban church recognize that *koinonia* in Christ includes non-members, non-residents, or non-white persons. Rarely does a predominantly white suburban congregation realize that their spiritual and emotional growth is being limited and manipulated by the systemic structures of racism. In the movie, *The Truman Show*, the character *Director Christof* is asked why Truman never comes close to discovering the true nature of his world. The *Director Christof* responds, “We accept the reality of the world with which we are presented. It’s as simple as that.” Most white suburban Christians are unaware that the world that is presented to them is a system created and based on an advantage to them, white middle to upper income adults. Until one suffers from it, one does not see it.

Given the continually changing demographics of suburban areas, how can the local church (*oikos*) be an expression of the whole people of God (*oikoumene*)? Realizing

that visitors make decisions whether to attend or not, what efforts can a congregation make so that the demographics of the community are the source of its own reflection?

James Gustafson in his book, Treasure in Earthen Vessels, defines the Church as “an historically continuous body of persons known as Christians, whose common life is in part institutionalized in churches.”¹¹ In the process of institutionalizing the Church some of the founding principles of the new *koinonia* proclaimed by Jesus Christ were overshadowed by secular and civic principles. Institutionalized models of *koinonia* eventually developed into denominationalism and local expressions of particular denominations. These local expressions of *koinonia* are also the result of several natural human needs and desires to form community, which may be inhibiting the development of *koinonia* given by Jesus Christ, St. Paul and early Christian tradition.

The local church is a naturally formed community: The Christian community has much in common with all human communities. Whenever the church gathers, some of our natural human needs are met: e.g., the need for socialization and a sense of belonging; the need for a connection to the local community and its history. Participation in the life of the church can sustain one’s sense of belonging to a particular local community. By contrast, *Koinonia* as a “fellowship of faith in Jesus Christ” may not be what initially draws a person to the local church.

The local church is a voluntary association: Voluntary associations assume that visitors and newcomers will choose to stay, join or leave association. Voluntary associations are frequently a gathering of people of similar ethnic and socioeconomic level. Parishioners and visitors have told me that they have usually joined a church whose

design is similar to their home church or the church which was formative in their faith development. E.g., architectural style (contemporary, gothic, historical), level of cleanliness and maintenance, and symbols and decoration (stained glass windows or clear glass, color, etc.) Parishioners have also told me that the apparent socioeconomic level of the church's membership will also affect their decision to join a church. People want to feel 'at home' in a church and worship God with people 'like themselves'. *Koinonia* in a voluntary association is based on the understanding that human beings only tolerate a certain range of diversity in their relationships and experiences. Local churches usually cope with the anticipated tensions arising from encounters of difference in age and social status by creating a variety of 'groups' or worship services to meet the need for community among people with similar interests. The effect is to reduce uniqueness to unity, assuming that gathering people of similar backgrounds and interests together will produce harmony in the community. But this approach stifles the creativity that diversity brings to a group or a community; it also limits potential 'change' that may be unsettling, but also life giving.

The local church is a *koinonia* of covenant. The local church bases its views, values and mission on the biblical notion of covenant that emphasizes the responsibility of individuals in relation to God and each other. The church is a community of confessed belief and shared faith in Jesus Christ, which are carried out in the Baptismal Covenant.¹² I was inspired by a statement made by a parishioner that she is always moved to tears by the congregation's reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant, "which forms our Christian character and in which we promise 'to respect the dignity of every human being'." The

church has a responsibility to provide opportunities for members to live out this Covenant, which includes the promises “to seek and serve Christ in all persons...and to strive for justice and peace among all people”. Incorporating new members into the household of God is a matter of justice and peace in order that the church may “be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” (Isaiah 56:7)

The local church is a *koinonia* of deeds and moral action.¹³ Parishioners often indicate that they also want to join a community that offers them a way to influence change in their family, community or in the world. Since the church is intended to be an agent of social change, parishioners seek a congregation that expresses its faith in action within and beyond the local community. In so doing, the church seeks to draw persons into more meaningful relations to the center of its life, Jesus Christ. Socially, this implies that the church seeks to expand its boundaries and to include more persons within the sphere of its life.¹⁴ In the suburban church that I serve, the Offertory has become an outward and visible sign of moral action and deed. Whenever there is an urgent need in the world to assist victims of domestic violence or natural disaster, or refugees from civil war, large donations are collected, offered in worship and sent to the Support Committee for Battered Women, the Presiding Bishop’s Fund for World Relief and the American Red Cross. Outreach committees also provide hands-on opportunities for parishioners to put their faith into action. E.g., serving food at a soup kitchen.

Loren Mead in his book, The Once and Future Church describes the 1500 year paradigm of the Church, as sending evangelists and missionaries to foreign lands, bringing the Bible, peace and justice “out there”. The local church’s understanding of

good deeds and action was to give *financially* to support missionaries. Those in need of spiritual and material support were understood to be “overseas”. But with the rediscovery of the ministry of the laity, and changes in the availability of healthcare and housing in our own country, the Church is in the midst of a paradigm shift. Now parishioners of urban and suburban churches are actively engaged *themselves* as evangelists and missionaries to their local community, caring for those in need at their doorstep. But with declining membership in most mainline Protestant denominations, the church can no longer depend on its membership’s next generation of children to do the work of ministry. The unchurched or unaffiliated new members with diverse backgrounds are needed, and must be invited and included in *koinonia* and its ministry.

The local church is a *koinonia* of common memory. Common memory makes common life possible. The community keeps its common memory alive by continually rehearsing the important events in its history. In addition to the liturgical cycles of celebrations in the life of Jesus and the Church, local churches also celebrate their community’s history in many ways: e.g., “centennial celebration” of the founding year, annual church fairs, picnics, Strawberry Festivals, soup luncheons, etc. However, in suburban churches there are times when attendance at local town events seems to take precedence over the celebration of the Church’s history. E.g., attendance on Pentecost is low if it occurs on Memorial Day weekend or High School graduation weekend. There is also some resistance to adding religious celebrations to the life of the local church and fear of low attendance when the event does not naturally arise from the church’s memory itself. E.g. Observing Absalom Jones Day or sponsoring a Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Breakfast when very few members of the church are African-American or very few parishioners are aware or concerned about the experience of racism in the Church or American history. Most suburban Christians have lost their memory of being “other”, of being a stranger in an alien land. My own Irish grandmother, living in a small Midwestern town in the ‘melting pot’ era, did not want to observe or celebrate being Irish and be discriminated against, but wanted to “celebrate being *American*”.

Several of these models, which the church shares with other forms of human community, fall short of the full meaning of *koinonia* given by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit and may have hindered its fulfillment. The local suburban church has depended too much on an understanding of *koinonia* as a naturally formed and socially needed, voluntary association of good deeds and moral actions, and has denied its dependence on the Holy Spirit for forming and sustaining *koinonia* and guiding its mission. There is a need for rebirth of faith and of *koinonia* - an “ecclesiogenesis” as Leonard Boff calls it.

The essential and primary reason for *koinonia* is not personal need, will or choice, although congregations often think they have created the community for themselves. Suburban churches need to recognize that the Holy Spirit has drawn them together in order for them to follow Jesus Christ. Therefore, the suburban church cannot adopt forms of *koinonia* which exist in the culture that do not include the model of *koinonia* given by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, “it cannot be a racial church, which permits racial separation and discrimination within its own fellowship. It cannot be a class church, which sanctions from above a separation or conflict of classes in its own fellowship.”¹⁵ For the church, as it seeks to proclaim to the liberating rule of Christ, the

watchword must be: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”(Gal. 3:28); “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him.”(Romans 10:12); “For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and were all made to drink of one Spirit.”(1 Cor. 12:13)

Reformation in the Church has always been the double process of a normative past becoming meaningful in the present, and a present crisis finding illumination from the past.¹⁶ Reformation is another name for “ecclesiogenesis” - *ecclesia reformata et semper reformanda* (the church reformed and always reforming).¹⁷ For Luther, appropriation of the New Testament was a complex process: both a personal crisis of faith and a social crisis in the Church evoked an effort to find renewed meaning of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Just as St. Paul had to relate his life under the gospel to the legalism of the Judaizing Christians, Luther had to relate his to the works-righteousness of Catholicism. Contemporary suburban churches must now relate their life under the gospel to their practice of being a natural formed, voluntary, homogeneous community of faith in Jesus Christ.

A renewed understanding of how a *koinonia* of diversity gives the Church its identity and mission is required if the suburban congregation is to persist as a “church”. “The precondition of unity is the unity in the recognition of and tolerance for diversity, plurality and difference. Unity does not reduce diversity, but rather allows it. Those who cannot tolerate difference are those who insist on separation in order to preserve a rigid

identity.”¹⁸ Only in our diversity in unity will we be able to carry out the task of bringing Jesus’ message of reconciliation with God to the world. The suburban church must stand for God’s love and concern for the “other” in order to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.

I have observed that white parishioners in suburban churches generally do not think of themselves as “other”, as being different or counter-cultural, but prefer to consider themselves as “belonging”, in position of control and dominance in the community. They have forgotten that Jesus himself was considered ‘other’, as *alien*, as *other than* the world, that Jesus challenged the purity laws that created and maintained cultural boundaries that separated people of one kind from another. Jesus prayed for his disciples that they would have faith and courage to imitate him. “Father, I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to this world, just as I do not belong to the world.” (John 17:14)

The strangeness and *otherness* of Jesus cannot remain a matter of historical remoteness. It must continue in the Church’s mission, with both Jesus’ cross and resurrection before us. It is only when the church comprehends itself as the present realization of the memory and teachings of Jesus that it perceives Christ’s “*otherness*” and the openness to a new *koinonia*. A “*koinonia of diversity*” will therefore be a fellowship with Jesus as the Christ who included the “other” and who now is to be sought in all varieties of people. The local suburban church needs to grow into the full stature of Christ by incorporating the “*other*”, the new member from a nation, racial or ethnic

group other than the dominant white, middle-income European-American majority, into its worship and fellowship.

¹ Hodgson, Peter C., Revisioning the Church: Ecclesial Freedom in the New Paradigm, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN, p. 11

² Ibid., p. 51

³ Ibid., p. 24

⁴ Tutu, Desmond, No Future Without Forgiveness, Doubleday, New York, 1999, p. 265

⁵ Moltman, Jurgen, The Church is the Power of the Spirit, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN, 1993, p. 66

⁶ Ibid., p. 5-6

⁷ Ibid., p. 62

⁸ Ibid., p. 65

⁹ Hodgson, p. 69

¹⁰ Cully and Cully, "Suburban Church", Encyclopedia of Religious Education, p. 620

¹¹ Gustafson, James M., Treasure in Earthen Vessels, Harper Bros. New York, NY, 1961, p. 6

¹² Book of Common Prayer, p. 304-305

¹³ Gustafson, p. 96

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 95

¹⁵ Moltman, p. 106

¹⁶ Gustafson, p. 82

¹⁷ Hodgson, p. 76

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 39

Chapter Five – A Vision of a *Koinonia* of Diversity

At every point in history the Church has a duty to be clear about its mission, its context and its ministry. The Church is the people of God gathered in Christ's name, and it must give an account of itself at all times to the Holy Spirit who calls it into being. The local congregation (lay and clerical leadership) also has an obligation to give an account of its mission, and how it's going to fulfill it through its ministry, to the people it serves and who gather to worship. A *koinonia of diversity* begins to emerge in a congregation when it examines the context of its life and ministry and asks itself, "Who are we? Who are our neighbors? Whom do we serve? Who is missing?".

This project began when I looked out into my congregation and asked myself those questions. I began examining my baptismal ministry, and realized that something needed to change in order for me to fulfill my Baptismal promise "to seek and serve Christ in all persons", something needed to change in me, and something in the congregation which I serve. Kortright Davis in his book, Serving with Power, describes one of the present crises in congregations as "socio-cultural anemia". "The thrust for homogeneity in our churches or the preservation of the cultural comfort zones in our congregations, is an indictment against what we claim to be about."¹ My own conversion began with personal study and participation in an Anti-Racism education program in another congregation. My ordained ministry then gave me an opportunity to challenge the congregation I serve with an opportunity to participate in a series of Anti-Racism Dialogues with members of other area churches. I also challenged them to begin a "Parish Discernment" process, with an emphasis on prayer for the discernment of *God's*

will for the parish, and not just the congregation's needs and desires. I knew that the development of a new mission statement could be an important step for a congregation to renew itself as a *koinonia* gathered by the Holy Spirit. I asked two participants in the Anti-Racism Dialogues to serve on the Discernment Committee.

My initial goal was to eliminate racism within the congregation since racism seemed to be a barrier to the incorporation of new members who are people of color, and then I hoped to work through the congregation to dismantle racism in our community. What resulted from the Anti-Racism Dialogues was an Anti-Racism action group (ICARE) which felt called initially to go out into the community to raise awareness of the presence of racism in our society. E.g. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Breakfast; advocating for increased funding of the METCO program.

As I mentioned earlier, eliminating racism within a congregation may need to be an “inside→ outside→ inside process”. In addition to ICARE's work in the community, four members of ICARE who are members of the congregation are now developing a Sunday morning series on anti-racism education in an effort to recruit more members of the congregation for this work. It is curious that more parishioners have now become interested in the anti-racism efforts of ICARE and have asked how they can help. Perhaps they were waiting and watching to see how the initial efforts would succeed before they risked indicating their desire to be involved. Four members of ICARE and two other participants of the first two Anti-Racism Dialogues are members of the Outreach Committee. They are currently coordinating a four-week Lenten series on Sunday mornings called, “From Charity to Justice”. The Rev. Canon Ed Rodman began the series

with a sermon and is leading the discussion exercises. The “From Charity to Justice” series uses the same “Ground Rules” as the Anti-Racism Dialogues. Therefore, 35 more members of the congregation are involved in the Forum and are discussing the Ground Rules weekly. Discussing Ground Rules such as, “We acknowledge that racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, classism...and other forms of injustice and oppression exist” and “We will be held responsible for repeating misinformation after we have heard and learned otherwise” is a significant steps in changing the mission of the congregation. Hopefully, more and more members will become aware of the homogeneity of the congregation and realize who and what is missing in the congregation’s image of itself and its vision of ministry.

The cycle of ministry in the Church is a movement of being gathered together *from out* of the world (*ekklesia*) and then being *sent out* to carry out the message, and then *called back* to be strengthened to *go out* again. It makes theological sense to me that Anti-Racism Education is also spiral or cyclical process. I hope and pray that an action plan will come from the “From Charity to Justice” series which will motivate participants to go out in the community once again with new energy and vision, and then return to the congregation to gather more to go out with them again. Hopefully, the ICARE group which helped to bring the “From Charity to Justice” series to the congregation is the leaven in the loaf. “The Kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.” (Matthew 13:33)

What a *koinonia* of diversity will look and feel like in the congregation that I serve is yet unclear. But others have given us a glimpse. Charles Foster in his book, We

Are the Church Together and Stephen Kliwer in his book, How To Live With Diversity in the local church, each describe organizational behavioral characteristics of congregations that have a multicultural understanding of community, or a *koinonia of diversity*. These characteristics have both positive and negative manifestations when they emerge in a congregation with a history of homogeneity. Knowing in advance the practical implications and possible organizational responses that may develop with increasing multicultural and racial diversity may help a congregation to trust the leading of the Holy Spirit and trust its lay and clerical leadership on this uncharted journey.

a. There is a need for tolerance of change and ambiguity. Members describe encountering the grace of God at the very points where the encounters of difference ought to be fraught with ambiguity. Members adjust to being unclear about what is “proper” or “appropriate”, and being unaware of where the congregation is going. They are not seeking to resolve this tension, but rather to embrace and live faithfully in the ambiguity and change.² This can have negative effects as well. The presence of diversity may diminish the attractiveness of a group both to those outside the congregation and to those within. One premise is that a congregation is attractive if it has clear goals. When diversity is developing, it is very difficult to establish one or a few clear goals. A by-product of diversity may initially feel like a “loss of focus”.³

b. Particularity becomes a catalyst to creativity in the congregation as a whole.⁴ Diversity creates tension and sometimes conflict between diverse groups of people. But there is an increased capacity to trust in the gracefulness of an open-ended future and dependency on God. There is a willingness to cooperate and co-create with the

Holy Spirit, to pray that it may “assist us with thy grace”. Everyone speaks; everyone has a voice in decisions. The ongoing multiplication of language and cultures present within the congregation becomes part of their self-understanding and part of their basic perception of how things are in the community. Music in worship becomes a blending of styles. Fellowship events expand everyone’s worldview.

c. **There is increased capacity for mutual critique, from hierarchical to horizontal.**

Foster sees the emerging paradigm as one which “shifts power dynamics from one of hierarchy and domination by the majority to one of interaction and mutuality.”⁵ Diversity can lead to effectiveness, as people with different experiences, ideas, and talent come together to solve problems and address issues. People learn from each other and embrace new ideas. It becomes more difficult for clerical and lay leadership to sort out what will and won’t work. The congregation critiques itself. The role of the parish priest as “Father” or “Senior Minister” to the congregation is replaced by the roles of “companion” and “servant leader = one who empowers others”. “When, in the field of human relationships, the parent-child relation comes to an end, and when the master-servant connection is abolished, and when the privileges based on sexual position are removed, then what is truly human emerges and remains, and this is **friendship**. The positive meaning of classless society free of domination, without repression and without privileges, lies in friendship.”⁶

d. **There is a gathering up of shared perspectives and honoring diverse gifts.** The congregation endorses the counter-impulse to differentiate groups along lines of culture, gender, and/or sexual orientation. Small groups with like interests are not

based on age, gender, or marital status. Diversity and pluralism are intentionally made visible, not suppressed, by gathering data about the kinds of diversity present in the congregation, interpreting it, and making it known. People share their culture, food, and ethnic customs at fellowship and educational events.

- e. **The embrace of difference alters the congregation's view of "church"**.⁷ There is a shared vision of what God has called them to become. Parishioners become aware of their call to be evangelists inviting a diversity of neighbors, co-workers, teammates and their children's friends' family to attend their church. When a congregation seeks to embrace diversity, it rejects the notion that any one cultural perspective is the sole criteria to judge what is important, essential or desired for its life and ministry. It begins to recognize cultural biases in its methods of communication, theological statements, liturgical actions and organizational structures. Its educational process becomes intergenerational and cross-cultural and its fellowship one that seeks heterogeneity, not homogeneity. The negative aspect of this change may be an altered view of what's needed for clerical leadership. E.g. 'how much diversity can they (staff) really handle? Does the staff have the ability to handle a diversity of languages and cultural expectations? Can the staff deal with the tensions and conflicts that sometimes arise when diversity is present?'⁸ Leadership (lay and clerical) must be committed to creating an atmosphere that welcomes diversity and must act as a non-anxious presence when tension and conflict arise.
- f. **A community with a common commitment**. Whatever diversity the congregation may celebrate, they can point to faith in Jesus Christ as a major point of commonality

and a unifying principle.⁹ Like the early Church's understanding of *koinonia*, it is the "shared ownership" of faith and gifts for ministry that unites the community. Encouraging more than dialogue, but working and doing ministry together develops interdependence between diverse groups. Since an existing mission statement would not have been developed with the voices of the *koinonia of diversity*, it will be necessary for the new *koinonia* to develop a new statement of common commitment.

g. **There is a dynamic of expectation, openness to the movement of the Spirit.**

Living with ambiguity becomes a primary source of meaning and faith because the experience of ambiguity contributes to a sense of expectancy regarding the work of the Holy Spirit. "Finally, the self-understanding of *koinonia* was rooted in the experience of the Spirit."¹⁰ An experience of grace in the presence of change and multiplicity leads toward deeper faith. James Fowler's Stages of Faith describes this experience in stage five as Conjunctive Faith: "a felt sense that truth is multiform and complex, and must in its richness, ambiguity and multidimensionality...be approached from at least 2 or more angles of vision simultaneously."¹¹ This can be a challenge to those who are at other stages in their faith development, who need clarity and certainty of understanding, and may not be able to tolerate paradox that comes with a diversity of perspectives. But "expectancy" may bring everyone to a deeper awareness of his or her dependency on God. Like the first Christian Pentecost, the suburban congregation needs all the voices and perspectives of many languages and experiences in order to be led by the Spirit and to proclaim the good news of God in Christ to the world.

I conclude with a recommendation by Leonard Lovett, “Pray consistently about ending racism as though all depended on God. Work consistently against racism as though all depended upon you.”¹²

¹ Davis, Kortright, Serving with Power, Paulist Press, New York, NY, 1999, p. 16

² Foster, Charles, We Are The Church Together, Trinity Press, Valley Forge, PA, 1996, p. 155

³ Kliever, Stephen, How To Live With Diversity in the local church, Alban, Washington, DC, 1987, p. 13

⁴ Foster, p. 123

⁵ Ibid., p. 18

⁶ Moltman, p. 116

⁷ Foster, p. 126

⁸ Kliever, p. 24

⁹ Ibid., p. 18

¹⁰ Hodgson on Schussler-Fiorenza, p. 83

¹¹ Foster, p. 167

¹² Lovett, Leonard, “Color Lines and the Religion of Racism”, Ending Racism In The Church, United Church Press, Cleveland, Ohio, p.30

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APPENDIX

January 19, 1998

Dear Clergy and Lay Delegates to Region Two:

I am writing to encourage you to attend the next Region Two Assembly on February 17th, at St. Mark's in Westford. I would like to lead a brief discussion on the possibility of hosting a series of **dialogues on "Anti-Racism" in Region Two** over the next two years. The Massachusetts Council of Churches has adopted the National Episcopal Church's "Dialogue on Anti-Racism" and encourages churches of all denominations in every town to sponsor a dialogue. I have taken the training with the MCC and members of the diocesan Anti-Racism Task Force, and am offering to coordinate these dialogues in Region Two. Location and dates yet to be decided. We will need a **leadership team** that reflects cross-gender and ethnic-racial diversity. I will need the help of **experienced facilitators** from several parishes, whom I will train on how to use the exercises in the curriculum at the table discussions at the dialogues when they meet. Please contact me if you want to help either on the leadership team, as a facilitator or hosting a dialogue.

Let me give you a little history and why I am offering to coordinate this program. A few years ago the Anti-Racism Task Force of the diocese of Massachusetts designed a parish-based curriculum in which I participated at my previous parish, St. Mark's in Burlington. Canon Ed Rodman and other members of the Task Force introduced and facilitated the 6-week program. It was a challenging experience involving a dialogue, not a debate, in which each of the 18 people who participated shared their experiences and understanding of racism. It was an important beginning. Other parishes in the diocese used this program in their parish as well.

At the same time the Episcopal Church was writing a curriculum for a national program on Anti-Racism, using much of the material written by our diocesan Task Force. They developed a curriculum which is a series of five developmental models, each taking 4 hours, which move from "Appreciating Diversity", "Prejudice Reduction", "Social Constructivist Model", to the "Anti-Oppression Model" and finally to the "Institutional Racism Model". On Martin Luther King Day 1997 and in the weeks after, each of the five models in the "Dialogues on Anti-Racism" were offered as pilots in several locations in the diocese. The Rev. Ann Broomell of St. Paul's in Bedford hosted the third model in the Alewife deanery in which 60 people, including myself, participated. We gathered in groups of 8 gathered around a table with a trained facilitator who led the exercises in the curriculum, and then offered our thoughts to the larger group. In Bedford it led to the development of a town committee on anti-racism. After the pilot programs were completed, the curriculum was further developed. I personally saw the improved difference between a parish-based program and a geographically based program. A larger, more racially and ethnically diverse group provided a better opportunity to learn from others and their experience of racism. The dialogues still need to have a follow-up component of evaluation of their effectiveness.

This fall I began as a Doctorate of Ministry student at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge with a focus on Anti-Racism. My thesis proposal is to participate and evaluate the effectiveness of these educational dialogues. Do they raise awareness of racist attitudes and structures in our

society? What actions follow from these dialogues? Do they motivate white persons to make changes in their workplace, church, school or community's life which would be more inclusive of people of color? I hope to develop relationships with 6-8 people who will participate in all five models over the next two years, and interview them along the way. As a parish priest, now serving as Priest-in-charge of St. Peter's in Weston, I am committed to helping all of us to carry out the mission of the Church: "To restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ". (BCP p. 855) Please come to this Region Assembly discussion and plan to participate in the dialogues this spring and fall.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carol M. Flett". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

(The Rev) Carol M. Flett



St. Peter's Episcopal Church

(3)

320 Boston Post Road

Weston, Massachusetts 02193-1540

Telephone 781 891-3200

Facsimile 781 899-1517

April 25, 1998

Dear Colleagues in Weston, West Newton and Episcopal parishes in Region Two:

I have good news to report on the Anti-Racism Dialogues being offered in Weston! On Saturday, April 4, 50 people from parishes in Region Two, churches in Weston and Myrtle Baptist in W. Newton gathered at St. Peter's to participate in the first model of the national Episcopal Church's program "Dialogues on Anti-Racism: Appreciating Diversity". The program has been endorsed by the Massachusetts Council of Churches. Ten days prior to the program 13 facilitators were trained by the Rev. Charles Virga and on April 4th the Rev. Canon Ed Rodman led the morning's group exercises and guided the facilitators with their table group discussions. It was a very meaningful event and those gathered expressed a willingness and desire to meet again in June and move onto with the second model "Prejudice Reduction".

The second model will be offered at St. Peter's in Weston on Saturday, June 13th, from 9 - 1 PM.

(For those who were present on Saturday, April 4th, I know we agreed to meet on June 6th at First Baptist of Weston, but when Ed and I checked our calendars we both discovered we had scheduling conflicts on the 6th, but were available on the 13th. First Baptist is not available as a site on the 13th. We welcome a host site for the third model sometime next fall.)

Others may join this program on Saturday, June 13th as we move onto the second model of the "Dialogues on Anti-Racism". Joining the program at the third model (Social Constructivist Model) is not advised since the program is developmental and the group needs to have developed a sense of community and trust to work together in succeeding models. So I encourage you to publicize this next event as an opportunity for **others to begin the program** and as a way for you to discover if you want to offer this entire series of dialogues in your parish. I also suggest that you **encourage college students** who are home for the summer to participate and consider taking this program back to their college. Several college students have already called and asked to participate in this June event.

In preparation for the second model, I will be showing the film, **"The Color of Fear"** at St. Peter's on **Tuesday night, May 26th from 7:30 - 9:30 PM**. It is a 1 ½ hour film which will be followed by discussion. Even if you cannot attend the June 13th dialogue, consider coming and bringing parishioners to view this film and participate in the discussion. Please call to say you are coming to view the film.

I look forward to seeing you on either May 26th or June 13th.

Faithfully,

Carol

(The Rev.) Carol M. Flett

I've enclosed a bulletin insert if you choose to publicize this on Sundays.

The Models Explained

Racism may be manifest in any race when it is in a position of power and dominance. In the United States our primary experience is one of White privilege, even in places where Whites may be a minority in the surrounding population. This comes as a surprise to many White people, because they do not think of themselves as racist.

— Pastoral Letter, House of Bishops, March 1994.

Each Model has, as its overall goal, the dismantling of racism. But each has its unique goal and method.

Appreciating Diversity Model has as its goal the appreciation of the different races, ethnicities and cultures within North America in order to facilitate more understanding and to facilitate inclusive environments. This Model will be particularly helpful for inter-racial/ethnic/cultural groups who are coming together for the first time, who represent at least two to three different groups. *This Model does not require previous anti-racism work or experiences together as a group.*

Prejudice Reduction Model attempts to expose the various prejudicial attitudes and behaviors people may have about their own group and other ethnic, racial or cultural groups. This Model can be used by most groups. However, it is suggested that groups have done some cultural sensitivity work before using this Model.

Social Constructivist Model helps participants understand how they get “recruited” into racism. *Racism*, in this Model, is understood as socially constructed. The Model

assumes that people are not born racist. This Model helps people to discover a way to stand up to racist structures and explore ways to change personal and institutional behaviors. *This model is useful for all groups. Previous training is not necessary.*

Anti-Oppression Model has as its goals the understanding of the interrelationship among various "isms" and their relationship to social power. *This Model requires that group members have done previous anti-racism work and that the group have some level of trust with each other.* Groups using this Model need to be prepared to continue the Dialogue and to take specific steps to eliminate oppressive structures.

Institutional Racism Model has a similar goal to the Anti-Oppression Model of changing racist structures, but it uses a different methodology. It uses social analysis to help determine who is included and who is excluded within the distribution of resources and who has power to make decisions and for whose benefit decisions are made. Since this Model uses the church bombings as a current example of institutional racism, it may help participants see timely relevance of this work. As developed, this Model can be used for groups who have not done previous anti-racism work. However, in using this Model it would be helpful for the group to meet for follow-up dialogue and action.

Racism and Prejudice are Not the Same

God's response to human sin is to establish a covenant in Christ Jesus that overcomes division and isolation by binding human beings to God and each other in a new way. For Episcopalians, the implications of this new community in Christ are spelled out in the Baptismal Covenant.

— Pastoral Letter, House of Bishops, March 1994.

How we define racism will affect how we understand racism and how we take active steps to eliminate it.

Social Power* is inherent in racism. However, if social power were not added to our understanding of racism, much of the abuse of power and resulting consequences of such abuse would be hidden from our consciousness.

The following definitions† are an attempt to make clear distinctions between the various types of realities associated with discussions on racism. It is our hope that understanding the difference among the terms and definitions will help us to better understand the action steps required for their elimination.

Some Definitions

PREJUDICE is a pre-judgment on insufficient grounds; it can be positive or negative.

BIGOTRY is a more intensive form of prejudice and carries the negative side of pre-judgment.

Racism and Prejudice are Not the Same

STEREOTYPING is attributing characteristics to a group simplistically and uncritically. Often there is the assumption that those characteristics are rooted in significant biological differences.

DISCRIMINATION is the act or practice of according negative differential treatment to individuals or groups on the basis of group, class or affiliation such as race, religion and gender.

SCAPEGOATING is the act or practice of assigning blame or failure to persons or groups instead of placing it on the persons(s) or group(s) to whom blame or failure actually belongs.

RACISM involves social power and prejudice; the capacity to make and enforce decisions social (power) is disproportionately or unfairly distributed. Racism can involve unequal access to such resources as money, education, information, etc. In the United States racism can be best understood as a system with personal/individual and institutional manifestations. Racism is a system which differentiates between Whites and Peoples of Color. Because the social systems and institutions in this country are controlled by Whites, Whites have the *social power** to make and enforce decisions and have greater access to resources.

In a racist system, "White" standards for behavior are considered superior, for example, and are the standards by which the behavior of other groups is judged. In talking about racism, Whites often talk about an African American, Black or

* *Social power includes institutional systemic and personal power of Whites in the United States.*

Some Things to Note Before You Begin

Ground Rules for Anti-Racism Dialogues

- Our primary commitment is to learn and understand from discussion facilitators, from each other, from materials and from our work.
- We acknowledge that racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, classism..... and other forms of oppression exist.
- We acknowledge that one of the consequences of racism is the systematic misinformation we have been taught about all groups of people. (This is true for both dominant and dominated group members.)
- We will be held responsible for repeating misinformation after we have heard and learned otherwise.
- Victims are not to be blamed for their oppression.
- We assume that people will strive to do the best they can to participate in the Dialogue process and to try to behave in a non-racist way.
- We will actively pursue opportunities to learn about all groups of people yet not enter or invade other's privacy when unwanted.
- We will not demean, devalue or trivialize any other person or group for their experiences or perspectives.
- We have an obligation to challenge the myths and stereotypes about our own group(s) and other group(s).
- We agree to respect confidentiality when it is requested.

Racism and Prejudice are Not the Same

Guidelines for Dialogue vs. Debate

DIALOGUE is the understanding of myself and others:

- I listen with a view of wanting to understand.
- I listen for strengths so as to affirm and learn.
- I speak for myself from my own understanding and experience.
- I ask questions to increase understanding.
- I allow others to complete their communications.
- I concentrate on others' words and feelings.
- I accept others' experiences as real and valid for them.
- I allow the expression of real feelings (in myself and others) for understanding and catharsis.
- I honor silence.

DEBATE is the successful argument of my position over that of my opponent:

- I listen with a view of countering what I hear.
- I listen for weaknesses so as to discount and devalue.
- I speak based on my assumptions about others' positions/motives.
- I ask questions to trip up or to confuse.
- I interrupt or change the subject.
- I focus on the point I next want to make.
- I critique others' experiences as distorted or invalid.
- I allow the expression of real feelings (in myself and others) for understanding and catharsis.
- I express my feelings to manipulate others and deny that their feelings are legitimate.
- I use silence to gain advantage.

Questions to Ask Myself If I'm Having Trouble Staying With Dialogue:

- Am I honoring my own experience as valid?
- Can I trust others to respect my differences?
- Can I trust myself to be permeable yet maintain integrity?
- Am I willing to open myself to the pain of others (and myself)? Am I able to live with tension?
- Am I open to seeing God in others?
- Or, am I feeling defensive about it?
- Or, do I suspect others are forcing me to change?
- Or, do I fear that hearing other news will weaken my position?
- Or, am I denying pain I really have the strength to face?
- Or, am I viewing others as "the enemy"?

HOPES AND FEARS

IT IS IMPORTANT TO BEGIN EACH NEW TRAINING PROGRAM BY SOLICITING THE PARTICIPANTS' HOPES AND FEARS.

Distribute index cards to each participant and ask them to list 2 to 3 hopes on one side of the card and 2 to 3 fears on the other side. When everyone is finished, collect the cards, mix them up and redistribute them; then ask each participant to read their new card.

Participants are usually relieved that they are not alone in their anxiety and fear.

Ask participants for any reactions to collective hopes and fears.

Save the cards because you may want to refer to them later or list them on newsprint if you have time. This is helpful for longer training programs.

(11)

I can't swear, or dress in second-hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.

My culture places no penalties on me for remaining oblivious to language and customs of persons from cultures other than my own.

If a traffic cop pulls me over or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my color.

I can be pretty sure of finding people who would be willing to talk with me on or advise me about my next steps, professionally

I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and behavior without being seen as a cultural outsider.

I can think over many options, social, political, imaginative, or professional, without asking whether a person of my race would be accepted or allowed to do what I want to do.

I am rarely asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.

I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to "the person in charge," I will be facing a person of my race.

Exercise:

"Understanding Privilege"

1. distribute a set of cards to each participant
2. Participants sort the cards into 2 stacks:
 - ones that apply to them
 - ones that don't
3. Participants share the

(21) My culture gives me little fear about ignoring the opinions of women and men who are not of my race.

I am not made acurely aware that my shape, bearing, or body odor will be taken as a reflection on my race.

I can worry about racism without being seen as self-interested or self-seeking.

I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help my race will not work against me.

I can be late to a meeting without having the lateness reflect on my race.

I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated.

I can arrange my activities so that I will never have to experience feelings of rejection owing to my race.

I can choose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color and have them more or less match my skin.

I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.

In my neighborhood I can be pretty sure that my neighbors will be neutral or pleasant to me.

I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.

When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.

I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence and contributions of their race.

If I should move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing a dwelling in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.

I can go into a hairdresser or barber shop and find someone who can deal with my hair.

Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial responsibility.

I can easily buy posters, picture books, greeting cards, and magazines featuring people of my race.

I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having my co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of my race.

DISCRIMINATION LINEUP

This process has been designed to illustrate the number of ways that humans discriminate against one another. This is necessary for participants to get in touch with their feelings around being excluded in order to discuss the injustice associated with the systems of advantage based on race.

Notes:

- 1. In this process, the participants will move from one side of the line (on the floor; one side of the room to the other) in silence. They will be invited to observe who is on each side of the line (room) after each question. This process should be done slowly and reflectively, allowing for time for the participants to consider the questions and observe who has changed their positions.**
- 2. Participants may ask how you define (discrimination'. Do not fall into the trap of the "definition" game. Allow the participants to determine for themselves when they have felt discriminated against.**

Step One:

Invite the participants to form a straight line on the tape facing you.

Step Two:

Designate which side of the line (room) is "yes" and which side is "no'. Invite people to change where they stand when asked the following questions. Those that have been discriminated against stand on one side, and those that have not on the other side. (You may add to this list or change questions as appropriate.)

- 1. If you have been discriminated against because of your level of education**
- 2. If you have been discriminated against because of your religion**
- 3. If you have been discriminated against because of your gender**
- 4. If you have been discriminated against because of your age**
- 5. If you have been discriminated against because you took a stand promoting nuclear freeze; against the death penalty; or desegregation of public schools, etc.**
- 6. If you have been discriminated against because you identify with those who are pro life.**
- 7. If you have been discriminated against because of your accent.**
- 8. If you have been discriminated against because you identify yourself as a liberal**
- 9. If you have been discriminated against because of a disability**
- 10. If you have been discriminated against because of you are not ordained**
- 11. If you have been discriminated against because of your immigration status**
- 12. If you have been discriminated against because of your race or ethnicity**
- 13. If you have been discriminated against because you identify yourself as a conservative.**
- 14. If you have been discriminated against because you are ordained**

15. If you have been discriminated against because in any other way (name it)

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Hang up the newsprint with Discrimination questions.

- a) What did it feel like to be discriminated against?**
- b) What did you say or do when you felt this?**
- c) To whom did you go for advice or counsel? What advice did you receive?**
- d) Would others with these same characteristics be discriminated against? Why?**
- e) When you noticed where/when people moved when you didn't, what was your reaction?**

PERSONAL INVENTORY EXERCISE

- 1. What is your ethnic and/or cultural heritage? What you most proud of from that heritage?**
- 2. Growing up, what kinds of contact did you have with people from a different racial and ethnic background?**
When were you first aware that there was such a thing as racial and ethnic differences?
What are your earliest memories of people of color being treated differently than whites? Recall an incident, if you can. How did you feel?
- 3. How did important adults in your life (parents, teachers, coaches, etc.) help you understand/interpret your experiences with racial groups different from you own? What did they tell you about specific groups? I.e. African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, Jews, etc.**
What was their main advice about these groups?
- 4. What was the most cruel thing someone from a different race ever did to you?**
What was your greatest fear about what they might do?
Where do you think this fear comes from?
- 5. How has racism kept you isolated and separate from others?**
If it were possible, how would you limit the effects of racism and prejudice in your life?
- 6. Name a time when you stood up for your rights or the rights of others.**
What did you do? What do you wish you had done? What can you tell me (us) about your family or your growing up that would help me (us) to understand where you got the strength/courage to do what you did?
- 7. How would your life be different if it were not affected by prejudice and racism?**
- 8. How would the Church, and in particular this organization (or congregation, or town, etc) be different if it were not affected by racism and prejudice?**

November 10, 1998

Dear

I want to thank you for participating in the Martin Luther King, Jr. "Dialogues on Anti-Racism" held at St. Peter's and First Baptist in Weston. I have grown from the exercises and relationships I have made and hope that your participation has been a positive experience for you as well. A total of 60 people have been involved in the first three models, and 28 of you have participated in all three. Your commitment to this program is commendable and I hope you will continue to participate. **Model Four "Anti-Oppression" will be held on Saturday, January 30 at First Baptist and Model Five "Institutional Racism" will be on Saturday, February 13 at St. Peter's.** The exercises for these two models require more time to be effective, so we will meet from **9 am - 3 pm** with an hour lunch break and food provided. Please mark these dates on your calendar and plan to attend. **Please call to tell me if you are coming or not** so that I can prepare enough materials and food. We will have finished the models, but our anti-racism work will continue as we develop a ministry plan for ourselves as individuals or as a group at the last model.

When I began coordinating this program last fall, I described in a letter and at the first dialogue about a project in which I am involved. I am a Doctorate of Ministry student at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge with a focus on Congregational Studies and Anti-Racism. My thesis project is to evaluate the effectiveness of these anti-racism educational dialogues. Do the dialogues help raise participants' awareness of racial attitudes and racist structures in our society? Do the dialogues motivate and equip participants to make changes in their own behavior or to make changes in their workplaces, schools, churches or neighborhoods which might help eliminate racism? In order to evaluate the program I need to interview 6-8 of the 28 people who have participated thus far. The interview is an informal conversation with a purpose. "What was your experience like as a participant? What did you learn about yourself? What did you learn from listening to others? What motivated you to participate in the first place, and to continue in the next dialogue? Describe any particular changes or actions that you took in your life as a result of participating in the dialogues." An evaluation of this program may affect future revisions of the curriculum and the development of future dialogues. Your insights and reflections will be a significant and appreciated contribution.

Would you be willing to meet with me for 50 minutes on a Saturday morning in December or any weekday afternoon in December at St. Peter's or First Baptist? I will need to record our conversation or take notes in order to develop my report, but no names will be mentioned. You will remain anonymous, and I will share the report with you. I hope that providing you an opportunity to process your experiences and contribute to improving this important program will be helpful and rewarding to both of us. Please call me during the day at (781) 891-3200 or at night (781) 863-1024 in the next week or two. I hope to hear from 6-8 of you soon. I will also want to meet with the same persons and some additional people after we complete Model Five.

Faithfully yours in Christ,



Carol Flett

Interview Questions

- 1. What motivated you to participate in the program?**
- 2. How did your faith motivate or influence you in your participation?**
- 3. What influence or effect did the church setting and the program being sponsored by the church have on how you experienced the program?**
- 4. What was it like to participate in the program?**
 - e.g. What hopes and fears did you have for yourself and the program?**
 - What did you discover about yourself and your understanding of racism?**
 - What did you learn from listening to others?**
 - How were you motivated to continue to participate in the next dialogue?**
- 5. What effect did your participation have in your daily life?**
 - e.g. Did you share your experience of participating in the program with anyone? Was it hard or easy to share what you learned with people who had not participated? Did you make any changes in your daily life as a result of participating in the program? In what contexts?**

I CARE INTERFAITH CITIZENS ADVOCATING RACIAL EQUALITY

March 15, 2000

The Honorable Paul R. Haley
Chair, House Ways and Means Committee
Massachusetts State House of Representatives
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Representative Haley,

I am writing on behalf of ICARE (Interfaith Citizens Advocating Racial Equality), an advocacy group of citizens from Weston and Wayland. We are concerned that the continued level funding of the METCO budget will continue to erode the effectiveness of the METCO program. Each year services to aid the education of children being transported from Boston to suburban communities are reduced by the communities themselves because of the level funding. The number of children that a community can invite to participate may be reduced without increased funding. Many communities, like Weston, are subsidizing the program beyond the amount reimbursed by the commonwealth.

We have read with interest a copy of the letter you were sent from Mark McQuillan, on behalf of the many superintendents and administrators of communities that support METCO. We find it incredible that the METCO budget has been level-funded for so many years when the cost of living has increased, and now when the economy is flourishing. Why has the METCO budget not been increased over these past years? We realize that there are other financial needs in the commonwealth, like the Big Dig, and Harvard Pilgrim Health Plan, but if METCO funding is not increased, what other efforts is the state legislature making in response to the 1964 Racial Imbalance Act? The goal that we request of you and your committee is to equalize the amount allocated for the basic education of every child in Massachusetts, including those who are transported to suburban communities. Increasing the funding of METCO to \$5600 per child would be a one clear message to the public that Massachusetts is concerned about the racial inequality of education and employment opportunities.

My understanding is that *all* the children in public schools in Weston and Wayland are "METCO" kids because the program is a partnership with the community. All children, white or of color, benefit from this first hand experience of working, studying and playing together. This will prepare them for a life together, and the future of our country depends on elimination of the structural and emotional barriers that exist now between people of different skin color and ethnic heritage. Weston proudly has a commitment to an 8-10% enrollment of children in the METCO program and would like it to continue to benefit all involved.

I will be present at the annual METCO Rally Day on Monday, March 20 at 12 Noon. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Carol M. Flett

The Rev. Carol M. Flett, Rector of St. Peter's Episcopal Church
320 Boston Post Road, Weston, MA 02493

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